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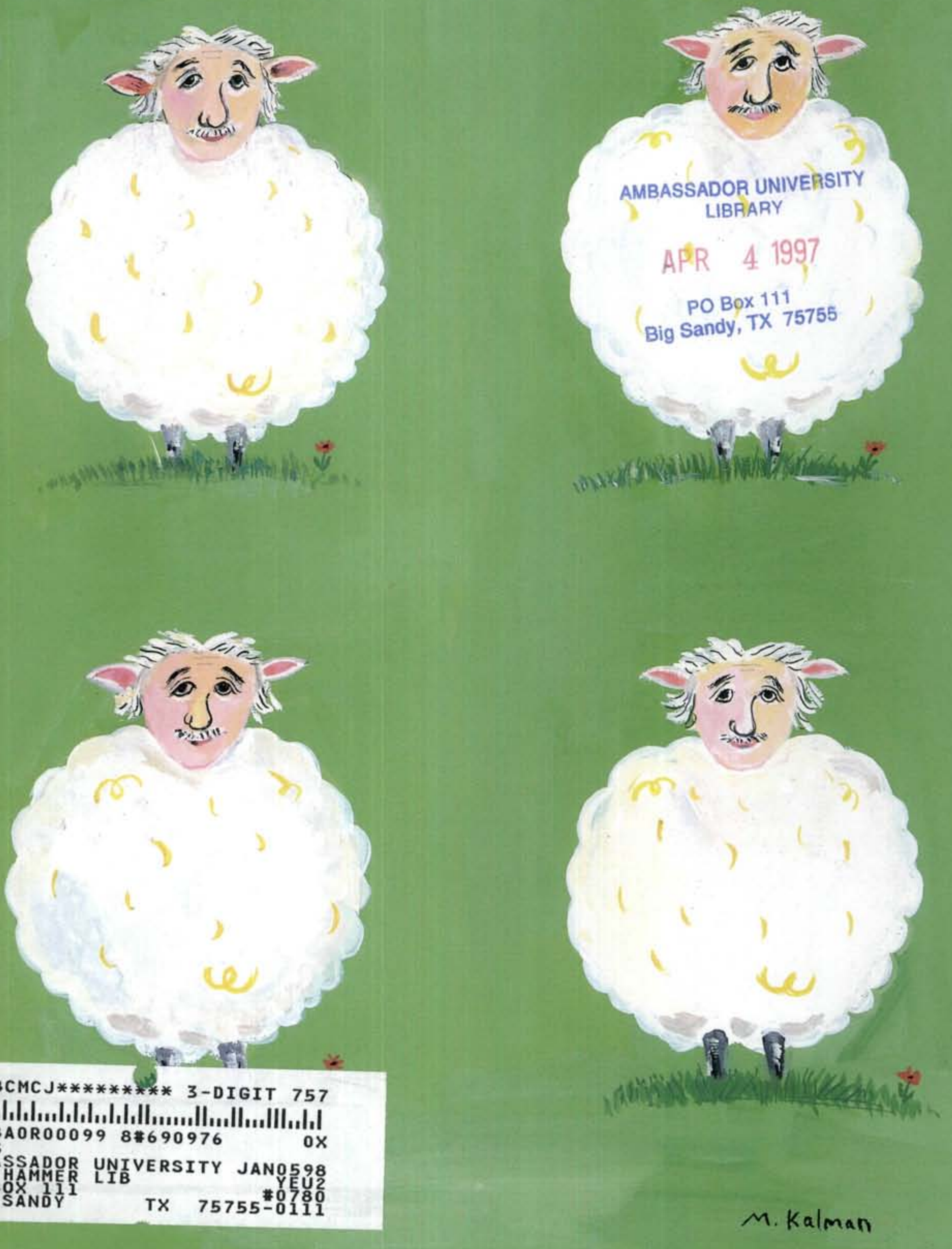

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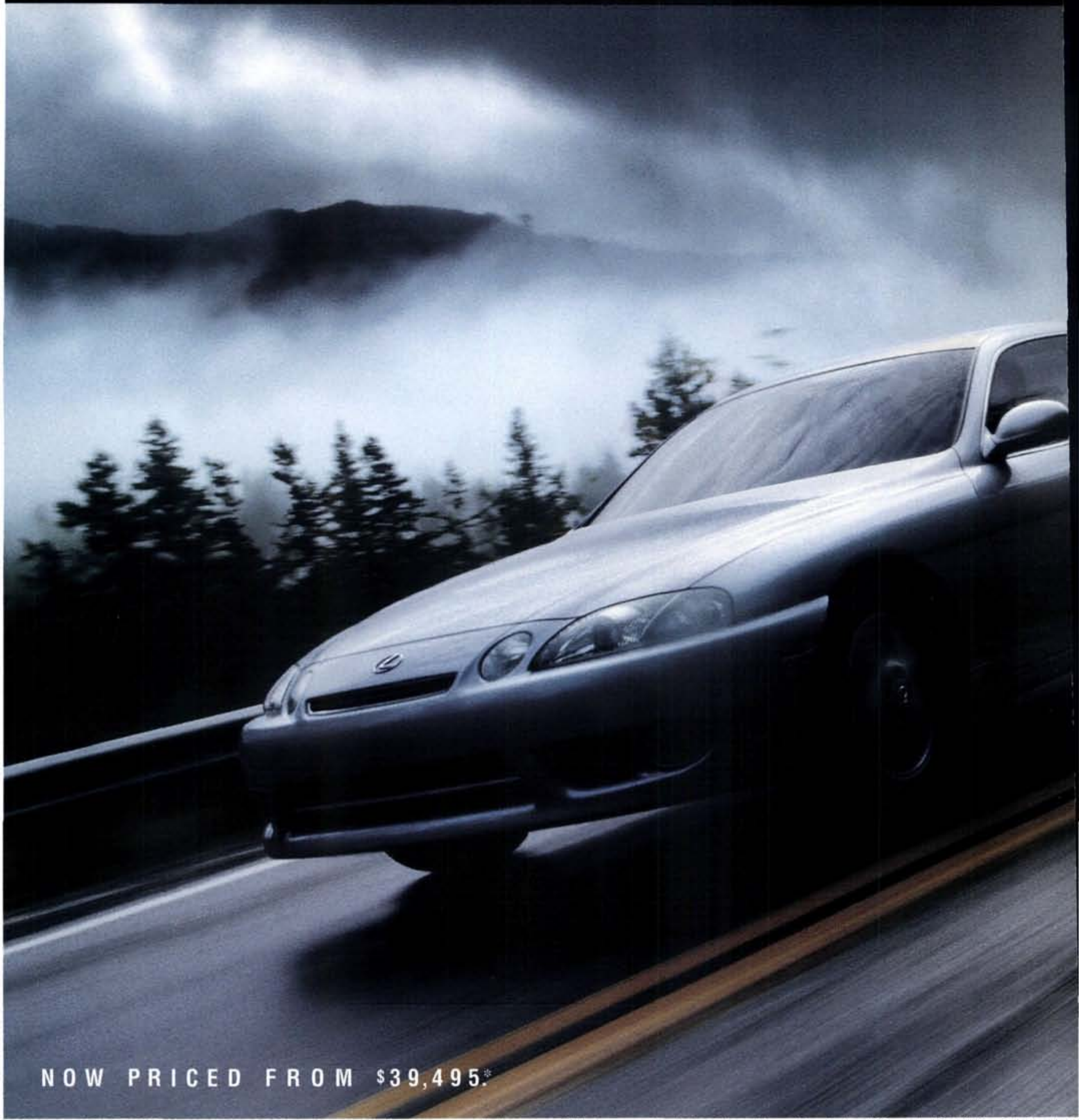

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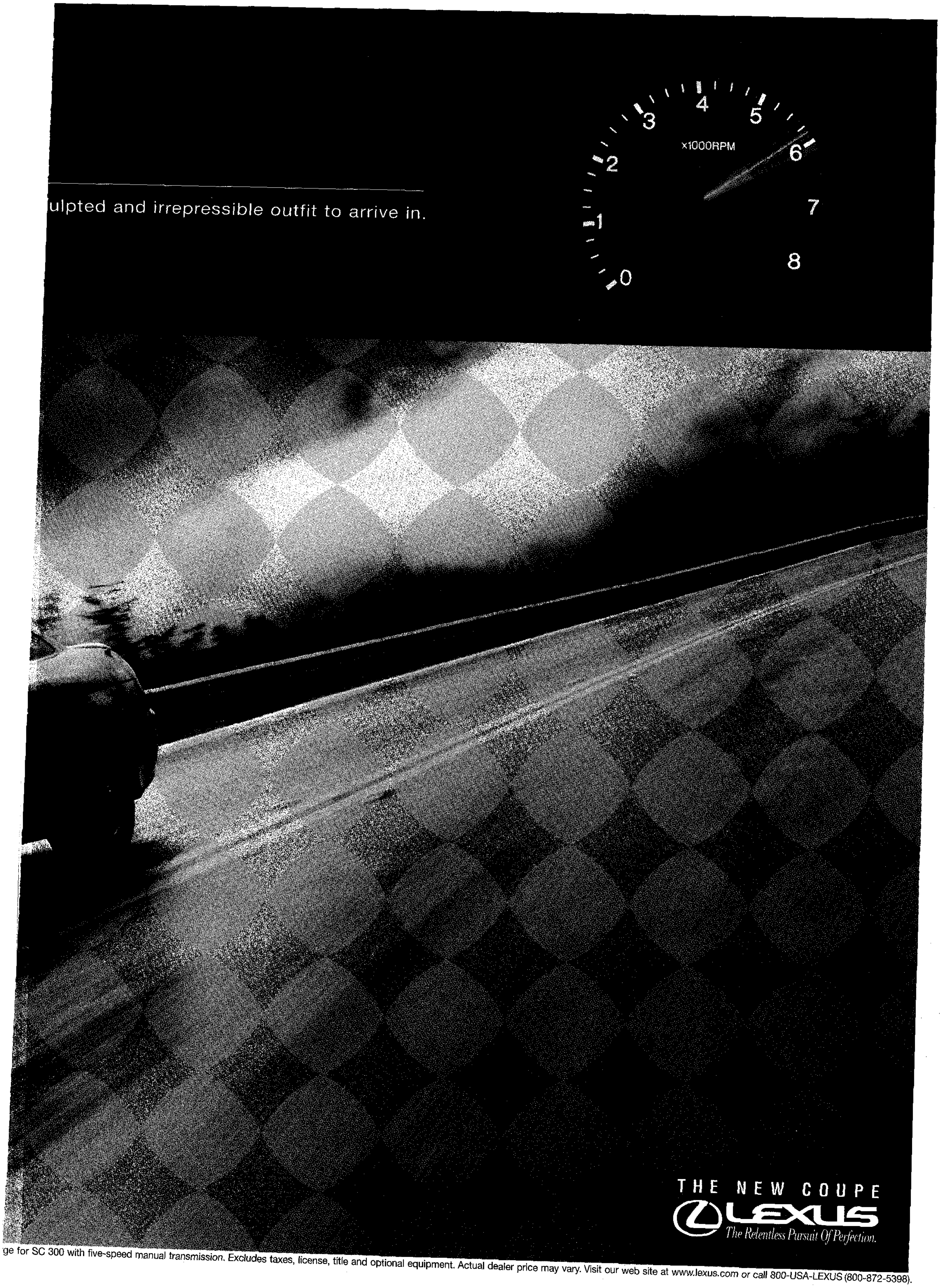

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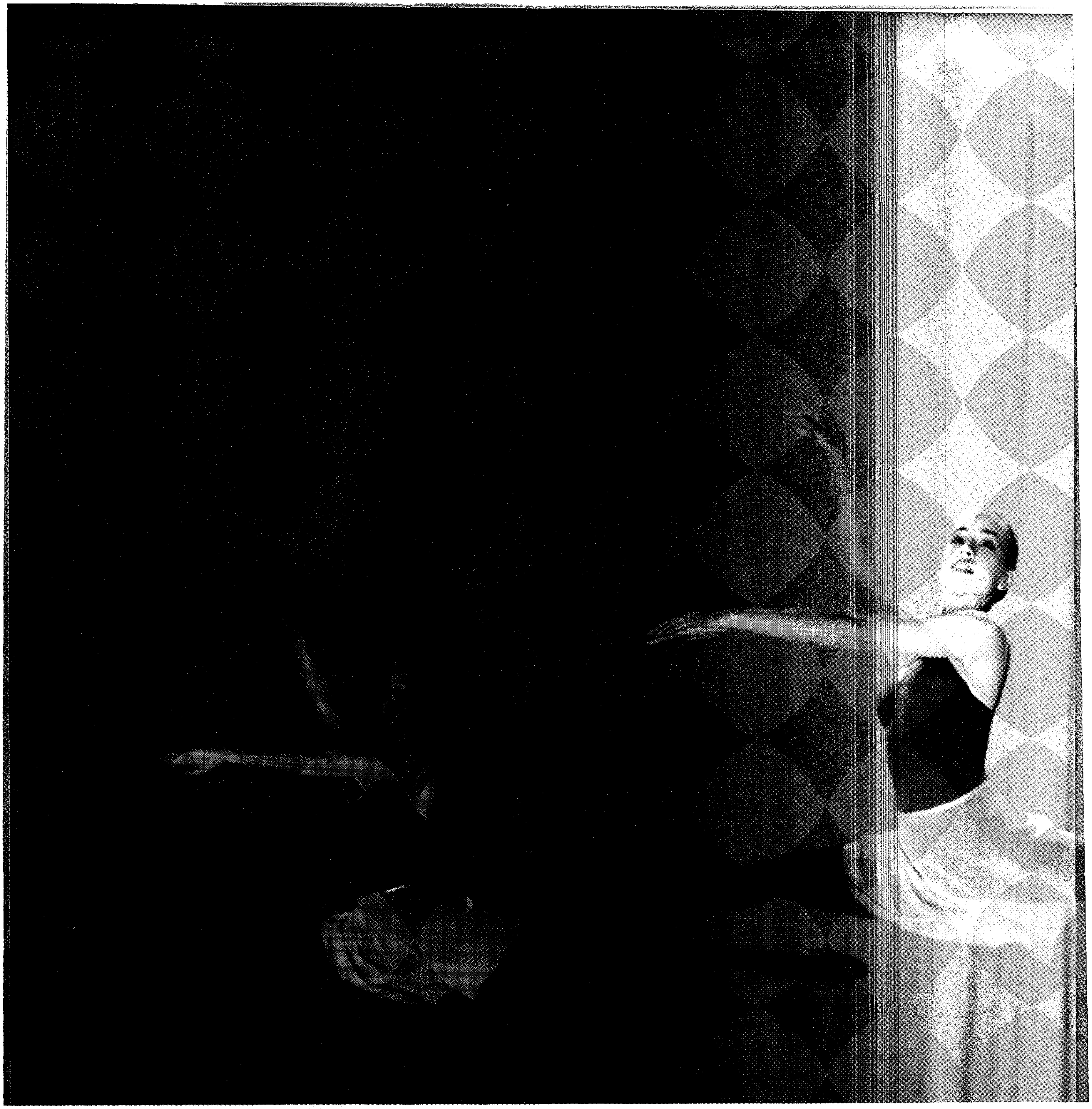

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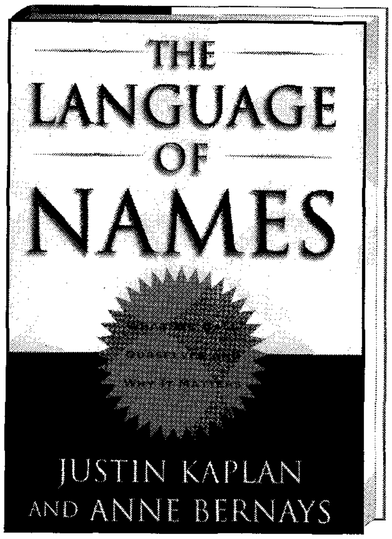

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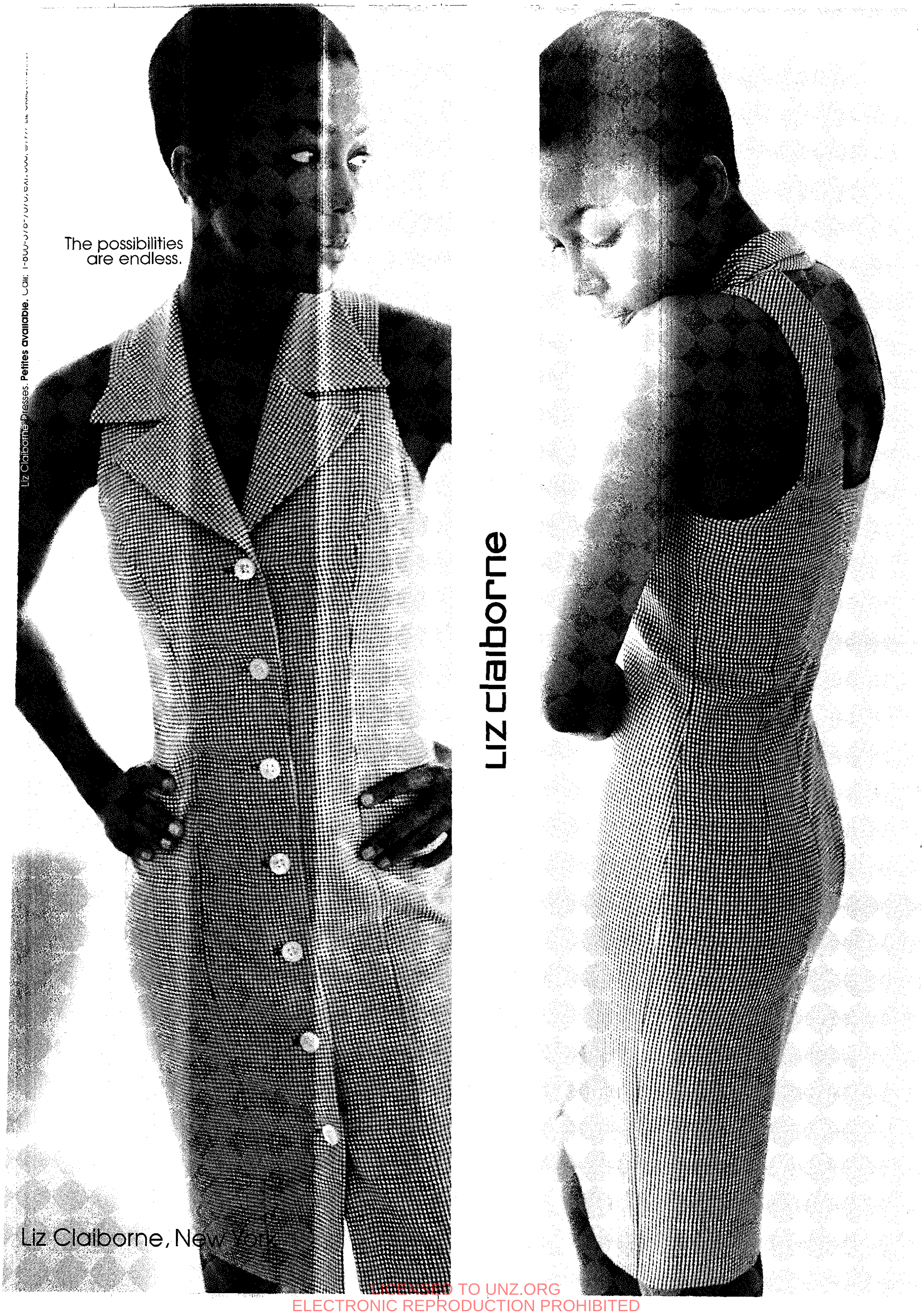
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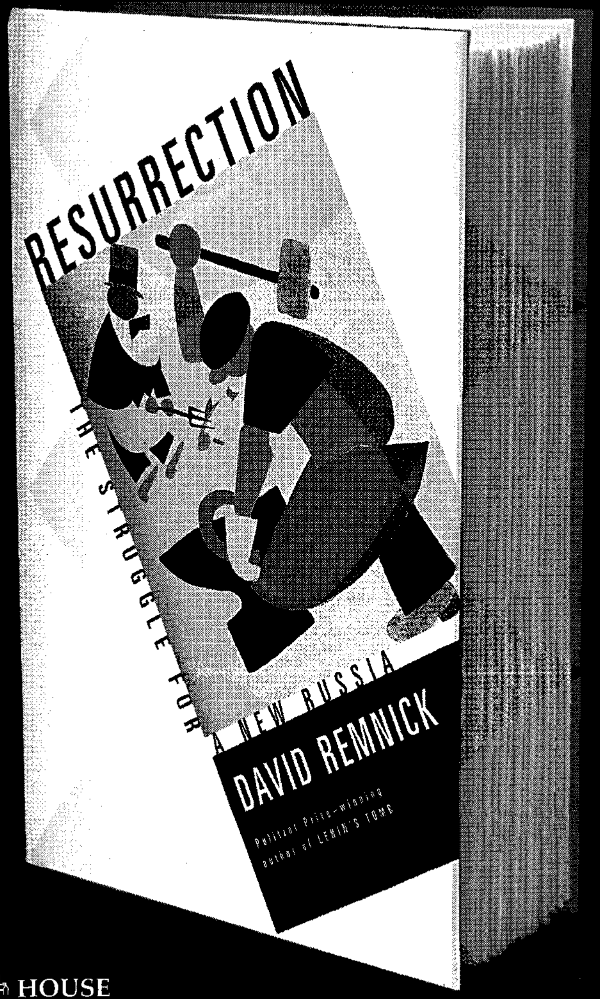
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Pulitzer Prize-winning author of LENIN'S TOMB

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COMMENT

SMOKIN'!

Liggett owns up.

SEEING a lie upended can be great entertainment. "Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain," the Wizard of Oz pleads frantically as Toto reveals the homely truth. In "Casablanca," Captain Renault delivers the movies' other great salute to brazen deception: "I'm shocked, shocked," Claude Rains tells Humphrey Bogart at Rick's night-club casino, "to find that gambling is going on in here." And in the new hit comedy "Liar Liar" Jim Carrey plays Fletcher Reede, a professional dissembler—that is, a lawyer—who for one magical day must speak only the truth.

The day before "Liar Liar" opened, the Liggett Group had a Fletcher Reede moment. At a press conference in Washington, Liggett, the smallest of the country's Big Five tobacco companies, announced that (a) nicotine is addictive, (b) cigarette smoking causes lung cancer, and (c) tobacco companies deliberately market cigarettes to teen-agers.

Duh. But the news here was not the familiar facts that the tobacco company was owning up to. It was the fact that a tobacco company was owning up to them. The attorneys general of twenty-two states had sued the Big Five, and Liggett had decided to turn state's evidence, so to speak. Its confession was part of the bargain. So was a pledge that every Liggett cigarette pack—L&M, Lark, Chesterfield (the brand that helped kill Bogart)—will soon carry its own bit of simple honesty: "SMOKING IS ADDICTIVE."

Like Fletcher Reede, Bennett LeBow, who is Liggett's corporate boss, had been a happy, high-spirited work-aday liar. In the course of an earlier anti-cigarette lawsuit, in 1993, he was deposed by the plaintiffs' lawyer, Stanley Rosenblatt. LeBow played the role of hardboiled villain with evident relish. When Rosenblatt started to say, "If I asked you, does smoking cause lung cancer—" LeBow snapped back, "I don't know."

ROSENBLATT: O.K., and you really don't care, because you're selling a legal product.

LEBOW: Correct.

ROSENBLATT: . . . [T]hat kind of issue is somebody else's battle, and you're going to do your thing, as long as it's legal to do it.

LEBOW: That is correct.

ROSENBLATT: And make as much money as you can while you're doing it.

LEBOW: I'm a businessman.

LeBow's apostasy, according to LeBow, "was a business, a moral, and a per-

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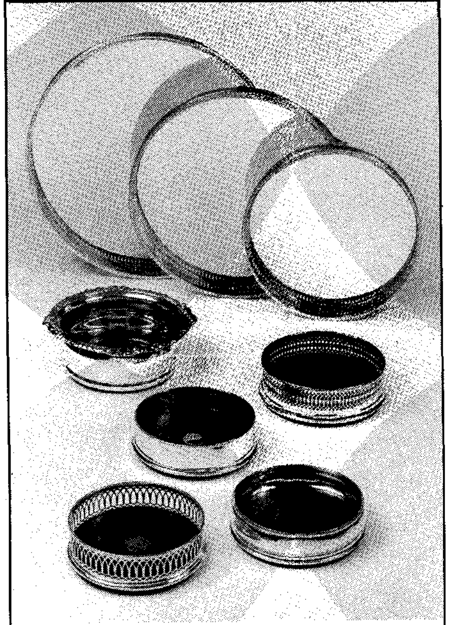

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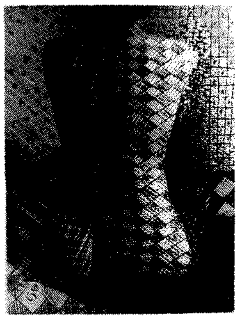

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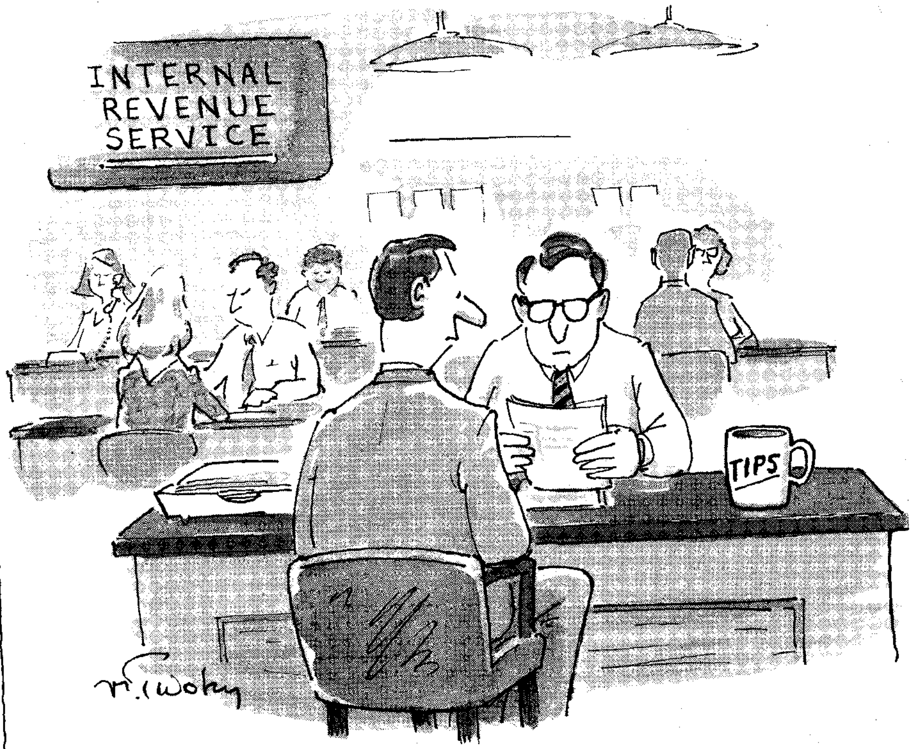
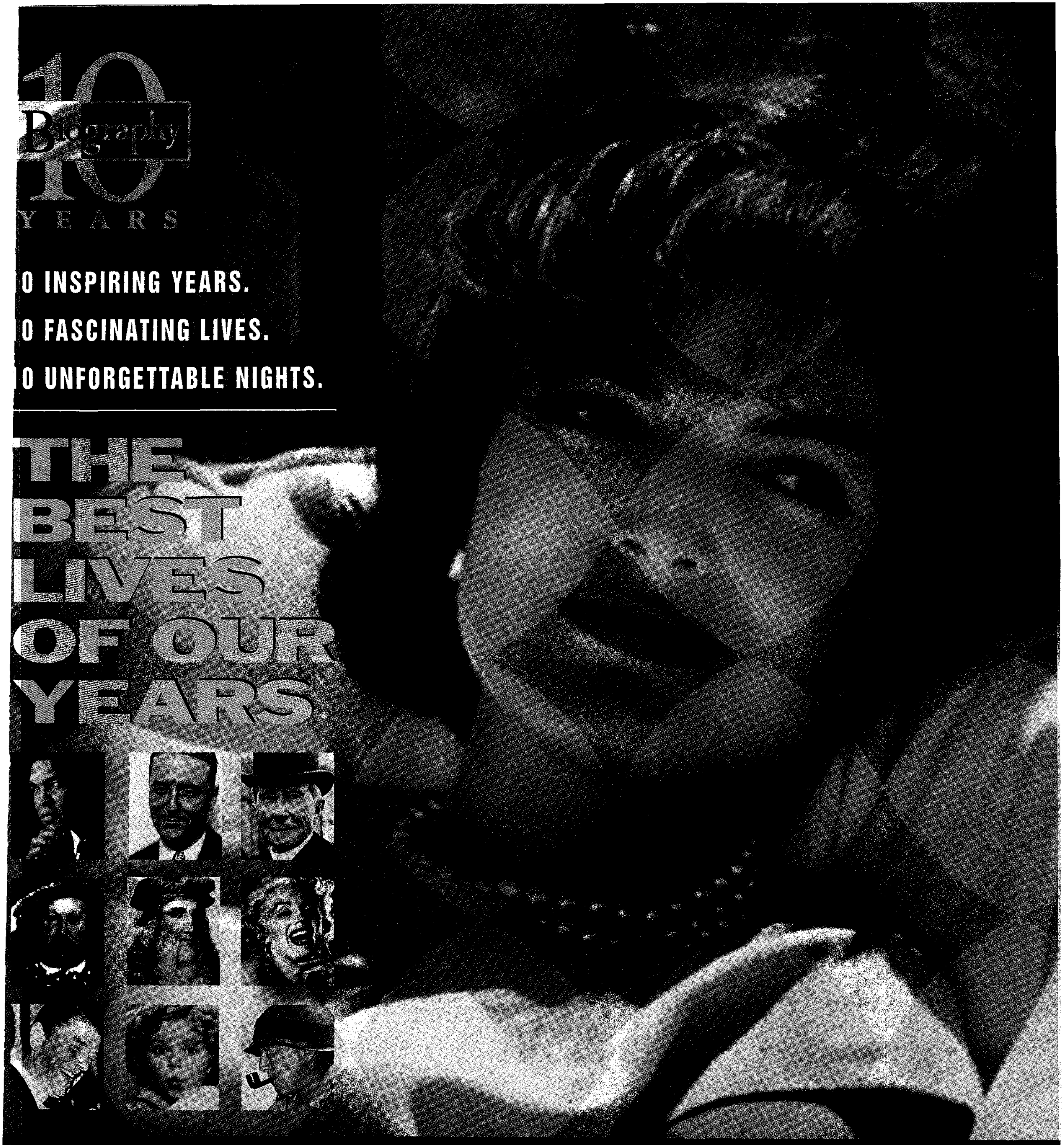


sonal decision." The moral part seems to have been driven by the business part: Liggett, despite the advantage of having an addictive product, is an unprofitable company, and has a negative net worth. In a statement issued by the public-relations department of R. J. Reynolds on behalf of Reynolds, Philip Morris, Lorillard, and Brown & Williamson, LeBow's more prosperous former confederates accused him of being motivated by, of all things, self-interest. "We suspect," the Bigger Four said darkly, "a desperate attempt to force one of the other cigarette manufacturers to take over his financially troubled and failing tobacco interests."

In other words, they were shocked, shocked—and right, too, probably. LeBow is no conscience-stricken whistle-blower but a snitch usefully squeezed by his weakened circumstances into telling the truth—less a Jim Carrey, or a Tom Cruise (in "Jerry Maguire"), than, say, a William H. Macy (in "Fargo"). But at least he is someone who has appreciated the exquisitely absurd position that tobacco executives find themselves in. Two years ago, a little-remembered Off Broadway comedy revue entitled "Loose Lips" included a version of the deposition scene above, with actors playing the parts of LeBow and Rosenblatt. One night, the real-life LeBow came, with members of his family, to see himself satirized. He laughed uproariously at the scabrous portrayal—Hey, I stonewalled! Under oath! *That's* funny!—and after the show he had his picture taken with the cast.

LeBow probably thinks of himself as a corporate Captain Renault, a soigné rascal who, for his own complicated, compromised reasons, does the right thing in the end. Yet a depressing kind of automatic Renaultism—a thoroughly jaded presumption and acceptance of all lies all the time—has become the American norm. The unravelling of the tobacco companies' "conspiracy of lies and deception," as Arizona's attorney general called it, is, of course, heartening. But before the anti-tobacco missionaries become too smug perhaps they should be required to admit a central disingenuousness of their own; namely, the suggestion that smokers smoke because tobacco companies have fooled them into thinking that smoking isn't bad for you. For the last third of a century, has any sentient American, smoker or non, really considered the tobacco industry a better source of health advice than the Surgeon General? Liar liar. —KURT ANDERSEN



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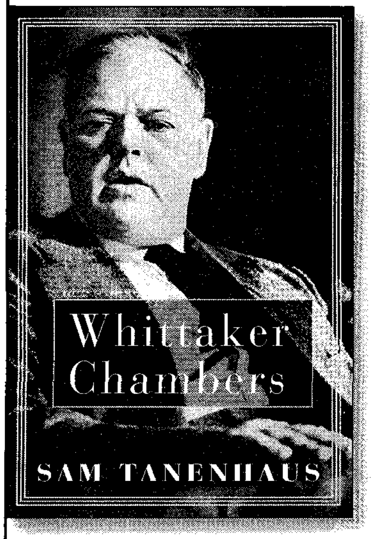

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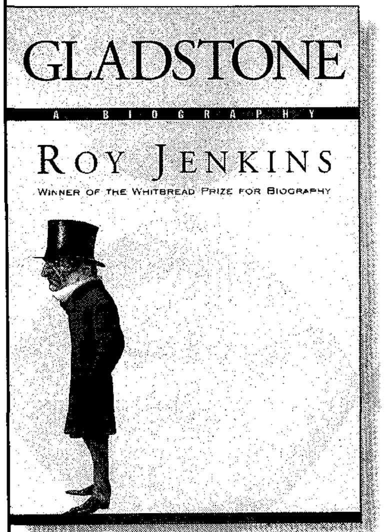

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STERN REBUKES

David Remnick tries exceptionally hard to make us believe Howard Stern's assertion that his “singular ambition” is to be “the most honest man in America” (“The Accidental Anarchist,” March 10th). Yet both Remnick and Stern refer to Stern's “persona” several times. Webster's defines “persona” as “an individual's social façade or front” and as “a character in a fictional presentation.”

I do not think Howard Stern is the Antichrist. Nor do I necessarily disagree with everything he believes in. And I defend his right to do and say things whether I agree with them or not. However, Stern's own words and actions are largely antithetical to his claim of honesty. Remnick's article serves only to prove that Stern is, ultimately, the world's biggest and most disingenuous phony.

IAN ALTERMAN
New York City

Cruel people often claim that they're just being honest, but Howard Stern on the radio is to the First Amendment as an AK-47 in a post office is to the Second. Rich, popular, and pathetic, Stern tells David Remnick, “I always feel like I'm garbage.” Even his many detractors must admit that he's just being honest.

JOE LAPOINTE
River Edge, N.J.

King of All Media? That term once applied to Orson Welles, who shocked through creativity, not crassness. In the difference between “The War of the Worlds” and “Spanking Lesbians” we see how far American culture has come in the fifty years from Welles to Stern, and how low it has sunk.

ANDREW LEWIS CONN
Brooklyn, N.Y.

POETRY AND PREJUDICE

Anthony Lane properly urges us to separate our evaluations of a poet's character from those of his work (A Critic at Large, “Writing Wrongs,” March 10th). We should indeed defy the coarseness of the current moral imperialism. I'm seventy-eight, an age that allows me to place T. S. Eliot's anti-Semitic statements in and outside his poetry in the context of the rampant anti-Semitism of his times. What troubles me is Eliot's failure to repudiate these sentiments publicly and explicitly after the full dimensions of the Holocaust became known. Whether or not Pound was legitimately certifiable, he was hard driven by inner demons, and Céline's rabid bigotry can be compared to an obsessive disorder. No such defense can be made for Eliot, who repeatedly let it be known that his work was rooted in the noblest religious principles and the finest elements of our literary heritage. Lane's advice is a two-way street: just as a condemnation of a writer's character should not prevent us from admiring his work, so our admiration of his work should not prevent us from despising his character.

DAVID GOLDKNOPF
New Paltz, N.Y.

A SCANDAL IN RIO

I grew up in Rio and was living there during the Second World War when the relief ship carrying missionaries from China, exchanged prisoners of war, and Emily Hahn docked at Praça Mauá on its way home (“Ms. Ulysses,” by Roger Angell, March 10th). All Rio welcomed the ship, and Carioca hospitality rivalled Carnival. That night, in the glamorous Copacabana Palace—a social setting dominated by the Latin code of what a man could do but a woman certainly could not—Emily Hahn smoked a long, slender cheroot with practiced ease. Five decades later, whenever I see a young woman smoking a thin cigar I am immediately reminded of Emily Hahn's stories in *The New Yorker* and her happy resolve to make her own rules.

MAGGIE FOSKETT
Sanibel Island, Fla.

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OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

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All My Sons—The Roundabout Theatre Company presents a fiftieth-anniversary production of Arthur Miller's drama. In previews. (Laura Pels, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

An American Daughter—Wendy Wasserstein's new play stars Kate Nelligan as a professor undergoing a Senate confirmation hearing for the post of Surgeon General. In previews. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Corn—A Ridiculous Theatrical Company revival of Charles Ludlum's musical about the country-and-Western star Lola-Lola, who negotiates peace between the Hatfields and the McCoys. Virgil Young wrote the music and lyrics. Everett Quinton is the director. In previews. (Chelsea Playhouse, 125 W. 22nd St. 307-4100.)

Dealer's Choice—Manhattan Theatre Club presents Patrick Marber's comedy, set during a poker game in a London restaurant. Directed by John Tillinger. In previews through April 6. Opens April 8 at 7:30. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

A Doll's House—The acclaimed West End production of Ibsen's drama, starring Janet McTeer as Nora. Anthony Page is the director. Opens April 2 at 6:15. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Dream—Lesley Ann Warren, John Pizzarelli, and Margaret Whiting lead the cast in a celebration of the songs of Johnny Mercer. Directed and choreographed by Wayne Cilento. Two previews on April 2. Opens April 3 at 6:45. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

God's Heart—Joe Mantello is the director of a new play by Craig Lucas, about technology, loss, class divisions, and liberal guilt. In previews through April 5. Opens April 6 at 7:30. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

The Green Heart—Charles Busch (book) and Rusty Magee (music and lyrics) have joined forces on this comic thriller, a musical adaptation of Jack Ritchie's short story about a broke playboy with dark designs on a rich botanist. In previews. (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

The Hairy Ape—A Wooster Group production of O'Neill's drama, starring Willem Dafoe, Kate Valk, and Peyton Smith. Preview on April 2. Opens April 3 at 8. (Selwyn, 229 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

Jekyll & Hyde—Robin Phillips is the director of this musical based on Robert Louis Stevenson's tale of the two-faced physician. Book and lyrics by Leslie Bricusse; music by Frank Wildhorn. In previews. (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Joy of Going Somewhere Definite—William H. Macy directs a comedy by Quincy Long, starring Guy Boyd, Jordan Lage, and J. R. Horne as three loggers who take a road trip to Canada. In previews through April 6. Opens April 7 at 8. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 239-6200.)

The Last Sweet Days—Gretchen Cryer (book and lyrics) and Nancy Ford (music) have fused two of their earlier musicals—"Shelter" and "The Last Sweet Days of Isaac"—in a new work, about two people who begin a romance years after being trapped together in an elevator. A York Theatre Company staging. In previews. (Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 935-5820.)

The Little Foxes—Lillian Hellman's 1939 drama about an unscrupulous Southern family of industrialists. Stockard Channing, Frances Conroy, Jennifer Dundas, Brian Murray, and Kenneth Welsh are in the cast. Jack O'Brien is the director. Previews begin April 3. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Old Man River—Cynthia Gates Fujikawa's one-woman show, about the long-term effects on her family of the U.S. internment of Japanese-Americans during the Second World War. April 3-4 at 7, April 5 at 2 and 7, and April 6 at 3. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

On House—The WPA Theatre presents Kevin Heelan's black comedy about corrupt hospital workers. Opens April 2 at 8. (519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523.)

The Plough and the Stars—Sean O'Casey's 1926 tragedy, set in Dublin in 1916, during the Easter Rebellion, in an Irish Repertory Theatre staging directed by Charlotte Moore. Preview on April 2. Opens April 3 at 7. (132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

Steel Pier—John Kander wrote the music and Fred Ebb the lyrics for this romantic musical set in Atlantic City in 1933, during a dance marathon. Scott Ellis is the director. In previews. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

Sympathetic Magic—From Lanford Wilson, a new drama about a couple caught on the horns of a dilemma. Directed by Marshall W. Mason. In previews. (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

Titanic—A new musical about the ill-fated ocean liner, directed by Richard Jones. Peter Stone wrote the book, Maury Yeston the lyrics and music. In previews. (Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

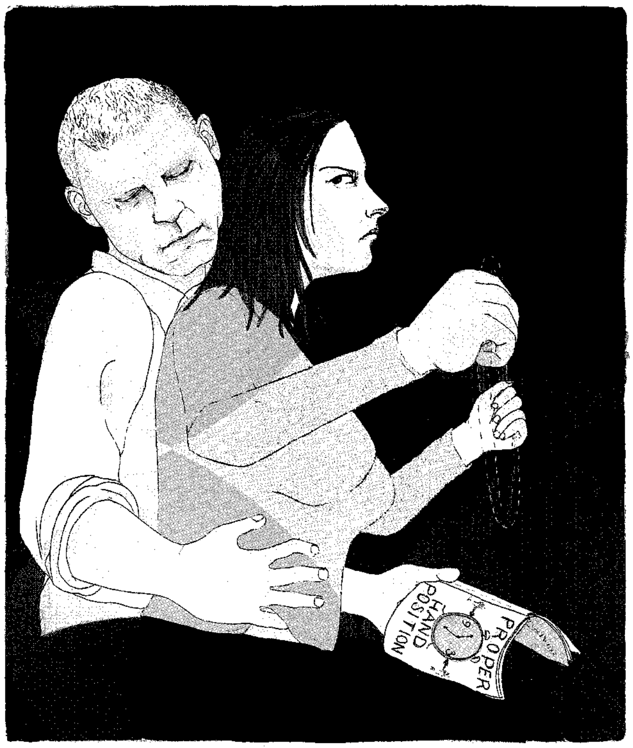
OPENED RECENTLY

The American Sleep (With Wake-Up Service)—Vermont's Bread and Puppet Theatre takes a crack at the American defense industry, in a new satire. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 10th St. 254-1109. Closes April 13.)

Annie—Can the powerhouse waif who eludes the orphanage, wins the heart of Daddy Warbucks, and gives F.D.R. the idea for the New Deal find another bonanza in this twentieth-anniversary revival of her Broadway musical? With eight-year-old Brittny Kissinger wearing the red fright wig, anything is possible: no one ever went broke underestimating the intelligence of the New York public. With Nell Carter as Miss Hannigan and Conrad John Shuck as Daddy Warbucks. Directed by Martin Charnin, who also wrote the lyrics; book by Thomas Meehan, music by Charles Strouse. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Another Part of the House—A reimagining of Federico García Lorca's 1936 drama, "The House of Bernarda Alba." The sexual politics in a house where five sisters, their mother, their grandmother, and a female slave are trapped, to varying degrees, are certainly something we're more attuned to these days. But the playwright, Migdalia Cruz, gives us more melodrama and near-psychobabble than feminism; the luminous performance by Irma St. Paule, as the grandmother, and the nervy energy of Sarah Erde, as the youngest granddaughter, can't create insight on their own. Directed by David Esbjornson. (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 677-4210. Closes April 6.)

Antony and Cleopatra—Vanessa Redgrave and David Harewood are the leads in Redgrave's production, and they are a startlingly elec-



David Morse and Mary-Louise Parker, in Paula Vogel's "How I Learned to Drive."

LARA TOMLIN

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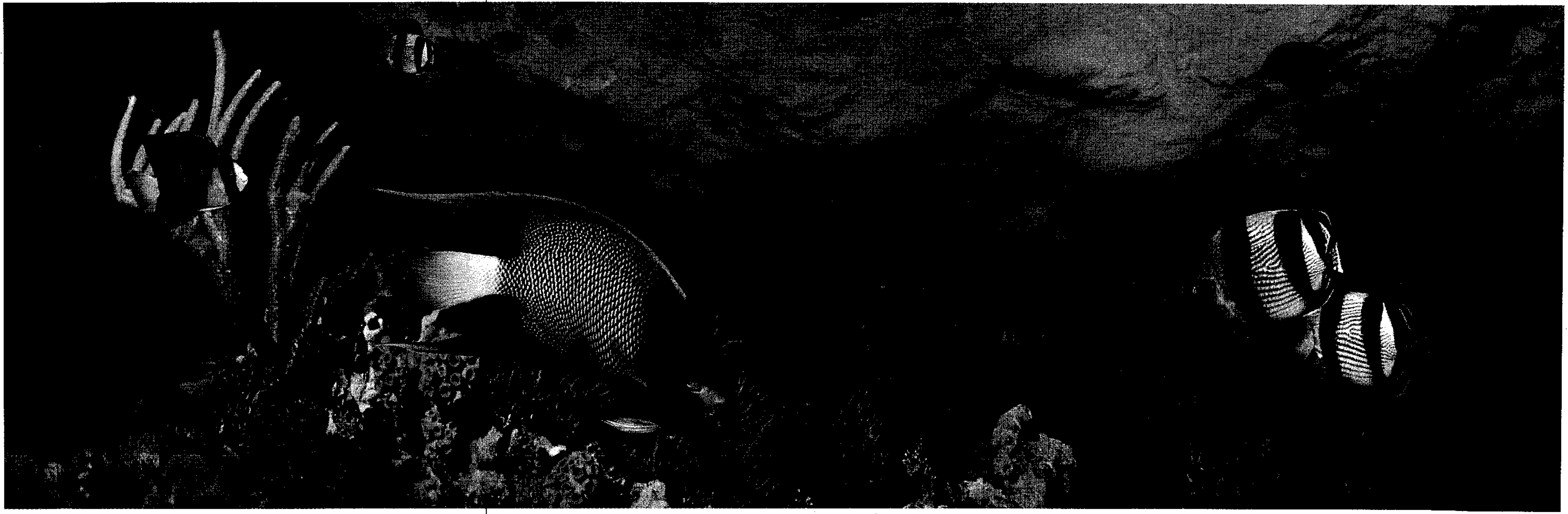

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tric pair of lovers; unfortunately, "startling" is also the word for the gap between the star performances and those of the secondary characters. It's an uneven evening, made more so by the muddle of historical eras represented on the stage: there's graffiti, in English, spray-painted on Roman façades; there's a reproduction of part of a Botticelli painting in the background; and there is—easy does it, Vanessa!—a phalanx of microphones on Octavius Caesar's podium. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200. Closes April 5.)

Barrymore—Christopher Plummer's rich, unmiked voice hits every note of sarcasm and self-loathing in William Luce's rambunctious script (which is as good as one-man shows get), as he perfectly captures the grief behind the old ham's gallant frivolity. A big, juicy triumph, well directed by Gene Saks. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Bunny Bunny—Playing no fewer than twenty-five bit parts, a new young actor named Alan Tudyk steals the show in this comedy by Alan Zweibel (one of the original "Saturday Night Live" writers) about his friendship with Gilda Radner, who died of cancer in 1989. The scene in which Tudyk, as Andy Warhol, slow-dances with Radner and Zweibel simultaneously is snortingly funny. Paula Cale and the excellent Bruno Kirby are likable as the leads, but Zweibel the author comes off, on occasion, as less than generous, giving Zweibel the character most of the best lines and making reference to Radner's bulimia over and over. Christopher Ashley directed. David Gallo's cartoony sets are a trip and a half. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

Chicago—Walter Bobbie's bookless, setless revival of the 1975 Kander-Ebb-Fosse extravaganza of cynicism (choreographed this time around by Ann Reinking) is about a woman who gets away with murder. This razzle-dazzle concert posing as a full-dress musical may do the same. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/25/96.) (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Doctor! Doctor!—A comic revue about the medical profession, by Peter Ekstrom and David DeBoy. (Players, 115 Macdougal St. 239-6200.)

Forbidden Broadway Strikes Back!—Gerard Alessandrini cuts a satirical swath through the Grea White Way in the latest edition of his musical parody. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599.)

Genesis—Actor and storyteller Max McLean presents a one-man show, a co-adaptation with Buzz McLaughlin of the first book of the Bible. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.)

Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde—A new play written and directed by Moisés Kaufman. (Greenwich House Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 279-4200. Closes April 20.)

The Guardsman—The Hungarian-born playwright Ferenc Molnár's 1924 drama, about the romantic machinations of a Viennese actor and his actress wife. Presented by the Pearl Theatre Company. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)

Horse Country—C. J. Hopkins's comic exploration of contemporary American culture stars Dan Berkey and Eric Dean Scott as a standup duo. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202. Closes April 6.)

How I Learned to Drive—Paula Vogel's memory play, about a young woman (Mary-Louise Parker) who comes of age too quickly under the tutelage of her pedophile uncle (David Morse), is a clear-eyed marvel, and the Vineyard Theatre has given it a beautifully spare and lucid production. With insight and humor, Vogel opens up a subject previously narrowed by fury, voyeurism, and melodrama. Under the excellent direction of Mark Brokaw, both Ms. Parker and Mr. Morse give captivating, sympathetic performances, and the rest of the cast is exceptional, too. (108 E. 15th St. 353-3874.)

The Last Night of Ballyhoo—In his new play, a romantic comedy of manners set in Atlanta (where he grew up) in 1939, Alfred Uhry stays true to a Southern sense of propriety: he takes on an unsavory topic (anti-Semitism among the Jewish upper crust) without dwelling on it long enough to offend anyone, and, like a practiced host, he shows you a good time without taxing you. The show has plenty of laughs, the actors (particularly Celia Weston and Dana Ivey as the central family's sweet-and-sour matriarchs) are well cast, and even though Uhry wraps up the ending too neatly, he does it movingly. Ron Lagomarsino directed. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 307-4100.)

The Little Frieda Mysteries—The deliciously sick humor that Amy and David Sedaris have displayed in their previous plays ("Stitches," "One Woman Shoe") isn't as feverishly funny in this new one, although it does provide Ms. Sedaris with an opportunity to reprise, for a few moments, one of her trademark characters, a wildly toilet-tongued toughie who, once seen (and heard), can never be forgotten. Also with Penny Boyer, Chuck Coggins, and David Rakoff. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 475-7710. Closes April 19.)

Men on the Verge of a His-Panic Breakdown—The Chilean-born playwright Guillermo Reyes's one-man show stars Felix A. Pire as a variety of gay Hispanic immigrants. (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 265-1086.)

Minor Demons—A big-time lawyer who returns to his small home town clashes with childhood friends when he is hired to defend a sixteen-year-old murder suspect. (Century Theatre, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

Nijinsky: Death of a Faun—From the confines of a Swiss sanatorium, the Russian dancer reexamines his relationship with Diaghilev, in a drama with dance written by David Pownall and choreographed by and starring former Royal Ballet principal dancer Nicholas Johnson. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 246-7277.)

Once Upon a Mattress—That modern madcap Sarah Jessica Parker shines as the princess in Gerald Gutierrez's revival of Mary Rodgers's silly, marshmallowy 1959 musical, but she deserves a vehicle that, to paraphrase Jerome Kern, is not merely lovely to look at but delightful to know. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Play On!—A female songwriter leaves the South for Harlem, in a musical the playwright Cheryl L. West has based on "Twelfth Night." Directed by Sheldon Epps, with choreography by Mercedes Ellington; the songs are by Duke Ellington. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

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Present Laughter—As the monumentally egotistical West End star Garry Essendine, Frank Langella keeps the core of Noël Coward's 1939 comedy of bad manners alive with a full-tilt assault on the character's outrageousness. Unfortunately, the director, Scott Elliott, seems to think that he's liberating Coward by turning the play into a bisexual romp. (11/25/96) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Psychopathia Sexualis—John Patrick Shanley's new comedy, about a man (Andrew McCarthy) who can't make love to his fiancée unless a pair of his father's argyle socks is within reach, is blessed with two wonderfully funny performances: Daniel Gerroll's, as a friend of the feckless fetishist, and Edward Herrmann's, as a hilariously inappropriate psychiatrist (he bangs a gavel on his desk to end sessions). Herrmann, the straw that has stirred many a theatrical drink, has been absent from the New York stage for several years, and his warm, outsized presence and perennial professionalism make you grateful for his return. Daniel Sullivan directed. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes April 20.)

Stanley—Circle in the Square springs back to life with this triumphant mounting of the Royal National Theatre production of Pam Gems's play about the British artist Stanley Spencer (1891-1959). Antony Sher's portrayal of Spencer, whose narcissism knew no bounds, is prodigiously energetic and emotional—and, against all odds, sympathetic, even as he abandons his wife, Hilda (Deborah Findlay), to marry a superficial lesbian (Anna Chancellor) whose beauty he cannot resist. The play itself has its limitations (too much talk about the meaning of life and art), but Sher's performance doesn't. John Caird, the director, and his set designer, Tim Hatley, have used the available space well, surrounding the audience with reproductions of Spencer's paintings and turning the theatre into a cathedral of art. (3/10/97) (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

Stonewall Jackson's House—Jonathan Reynolds's comedy, about a woman who pushes the racial envelope, hits all its targets—from multiculturalism to the misuses of history—with deadly aim, and the versatile cast is hilarious. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

Tap Dogs—Australia's work-booted tap troupe brings its North American tour to New York. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

Terra Incognita—A sophomoric gloss, in the form of an "opera for the theatre," on the past five hundred years of interaction between the Old World and the New. Perhaps Maria Irene Fornes, who wrote and directed, hoped that the intensity of the singing would hide the banality of her libretto, in which three present-day American vacationers in Spain meet a sixteenth-century missionary to the Indians (John Muriello, in a powerful performance) and a mad beggar who doubles as Columbus. Unfortunately, the fine voices of the five-member cast and some charmingly funny moments only make her lack of new ideas more evident. (INTAR, 420 W. 42nd St. 695-6134.)

Three Sisters—Scott Elliott has assembled a dozen big and biggish names for this production of Chekhov's play, and it's as if he got lost in the stars: for the audience, the experience is one of watching actors act instead of seeing how people live. (3/10/97) (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400. Closes April 6.)

Violet—A musical based on Doris Betts's story "The Ugliest Pilgrim," about a scarred woman's journey to seek the help of a TV faith healer. Music by Jeanine Tesori; book and lyrics by Brian Crawley. Directed by Susan H. Schulman. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes April 6.)

Wine-Blue-Open-Water—A modern staging of Homer's Odyssey, by the Gale Gates et al. company. (67 Broad St., fifteenth floor. 269-7858.)

The Young Man from Atlanta—Rip Torn and Shirley Knight star in Horton Foote's 1995 drama, set in Houston in the nineteen-fifties, about a couple living in the aftermath of their only child's death. Robert Falls is the director. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

LONG RUNS

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **BRING IN DA NOISE, BRING IN DA FUNK:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FULL GALLOP:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM:** St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **GRANDMA SYLVIA'S FUNERAL:** SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555. . . . **HOWARD CRABTREE'S WHEN PIGS FLY:** Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. . . . **I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **THE KING AND I:** Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100. . . . **LATE NITE CATECHISM:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **MASTER CLASS:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. . . . **ROB BECKER'S DEFENDING THE CAVEMAN:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 307-4100. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 279-4200. . . . **VICTOR/VICTORIA:** Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.

Folk-dance companies from Russia, at BAM.

LIDIA NESTEROVA

DANCE

Russian Folk Festival—Seven ensembles from remote sections of Russia, such as the sixteen-member Northern Pearls, from the Archangel region, on the White Sea, and the Volnitsa Ensemble, ten Cossacks from Rostov-on-Don, join in celebrating the reëmergence of folk dances and songs largely suppressed in the Soviet era. (BAM's Majestic Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. April 3 at 7, April 5 at 8, and April 6 at 2 and 7.)

Ballet Tech—Those intrigued by this latest incarnation of Eliot Feld's troupe should look to twenty-seven-year-old Darren Gibson. Currently serving the company as principal dancer, ballet master, board member, and subway-poster model, Gibson was the first of the students in Feld's program for New York schoolchildren to graduate to the professional troupe. His initial encounter with Feld choreography came in the fourth grade, at P.S. 111, in Queens. "They needed boys to try out," Gibson recalls, so he went with a friend "to get out of class. When we got there, they were running around and jumping and doing things that didn't make sense." These days, Feld has told reporters, Gibson knows the repertory better than the choreographer himself. Anyone curious to see what kind of sense the dancer makes of it now can catch him in "Evoe," Feld's take on "Afternoon of a Faun," or in "Juke Box," where he heats up the stage in a duet with Patricia Tuthill. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. April 1-4 and April 8 at 8, April 5 at 2 and 8, and April 6 at noon and 4. Through April 13.)

"Food for Thought"—As a means of putting food on the table, dance has been much maligned. For three nights this weekend, Danspace Project takes steps to reverse this prejudice. Gina Gibney, Allyson Greene, and Christalyn E. Wright each curate a night's worth of new dance; ticket buyers are encouraged to show up with cans of food to donate to local programs. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. April 4-6 at 8:30.)

"Founders Celebration"—Members of the first generation of artists to appear at Dance Theatre Workshop return to its stage. Among those performing recent work, Tina Croll brings "Signals," Deborah Jowitt "Body (in) Print," and Ze'eva Cohen "Negotiations." (219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. April 3-5 at 8 and April 6 at 3.)

Balé Folclórico da Bahia—In a survey of traditional Afro-Brazilian dance, the thirty dancers and musicians of this North Brazilian troupe leap, kick, wheel, entwine, and do their damnedest to convince the audience to get up and do the same. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. April 3-5 at 8.)

"Bellavia"—John Passafiume's meditation on the lures and pitfalls of assimilation, set at an Italian-American wedding reception in the Louis Prima era. (Rose Building, Lincoln Center. 627-8627. April 2-5 at 8 and April 6 at 3.)

Martha at Mother—This month's lineup for the dance revue hosted by Martha Graham channeller Richard Move includes Douglas Dunn, in his "Familial Fetches, Usufructuary Footfalls," and Yves Musard, in "The Invisible Ball." Lucy Sexton and Anne Iobst of Dancenoise appear as the Weimar Expressionists Hanya Holm and Valeska Gert. (432 W. 14th St. 366-5680. April 2 at 9.)

Bill Young & Dancers—The barefoot company with the sophisticated dynamic range celebrates a decade of performances, with two repertory works and two premières. (Merce Cunningham Studio, 55 Bethune St. 924-0077. April 3-5 at 9 and April 6 at 7.)

Movin' Spirit Dance Company—Marlies Yearby, the choreographer of "Rent," presents new work. (Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers St. 346-8510. April 3-5 at 8 and April 6 at 3.)

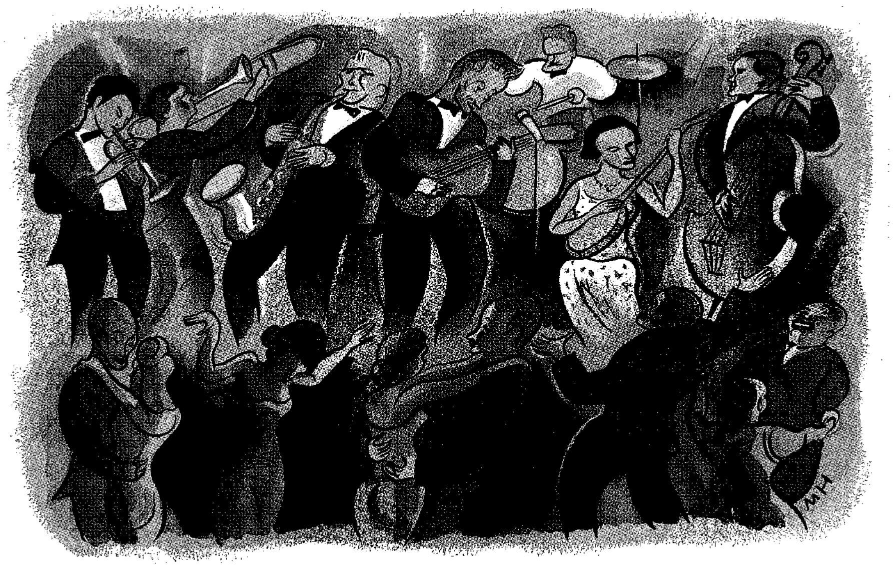
NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

"Salute to Frank Wess"—And hence a salute to suppleness, elegance, and grace. A kicking tenor saxophonist, a mellifluous altoist, and an innovative flutist, this former Basie star combines old-school swing verities with a modernist's temperament. Onboard to pay homage to the master will be pianist Billy Taylor, trombonist Benny Powell, saxophonist Jimmy Heath, trumpeter Jimmy Owens, drummer Grady Tate, and bassist Lynn Seaton. (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. 346-1715. April 3 at 8.)

Kartik Seshadri—A disciple of the sitar virtuoso Ravi Shankar makes his New York solo début. Bikram Ghosh accompanies on the tabla. (Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St. 517-2742. April 3 at 8.)

B. B. King, Bobby (Blue) Bland, and Ruth Brown—A blues summit meeting. (Apollo Theatre, 253 W. 125th St. 864-0372. April 4 at 7 and 11. . . . ¶ Westbury Music Fair. 516-334-0800. April 6 at 3 and 7.)



The Squirrel Nut Zippers heat up the dance floor, at Irving Plaza.

MARCELLUS HALL

Peter, Paul & Mary—These urban folkies are certainly older and wider than the earnest trio of yore, but their spirits remain strong, and their harmonies are still remarkable. (Westbury Music Fair. April 4 at 8.)

"The Sixties Broadway Songbook"—A medley of show tunes, featuring singers Rita Gardner, Lilianne Montevecchi, Christian Nova, Lee Roy Reams, Phillip Officer, and KT Sullivan. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. April 4 at 8.)

Sick of It All—Queens's favorite hardcore band, performing in a Manhattan roller rink. (Roxy, 515 W. 18th St. 307-7171. April 5 at 8.)

"Ira Gershwin in Song"—Pianist Steven Blier, baritone Kurt Ollmann, and soprano Jeanne Lehman perform songs the lyricist wrote with composers other than his little brother. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. April 8-9 at 8.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it is always advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—**JULIE WILSON** is at work in the woody nook known as the Oak Room through April 5. **WESLIA WHITFIELD** settles in for a month on April 8. Dining.

Arthur's Tavern, 57 Grove St. (675-6879)—Mondays belong to the Grove Street Stompers, Tuesdays through Thursdays to Al Bundy and Johnny Parker, Fridays and Saturdays to the Freddy Francis trio, and Sundays to Lee Lorenz and the Creole Cookin' Jazz Band.

Birdland, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—The legendary club has a new address and bigger digs. **MULGREW MILLER** (April 3-5) is a product of Memphis, a town whose jazz pianists invariably fall under the shadow of the florid legend Phineas Newborn. Miller, who tested his mettle with Art Blakey in the eighties, can also be loquacious; his solos tend toward grand orations. April 6: The **HARALD HAERTER/DEWEY REDMAN** quintet. His son Joshua may be grabbing the spotlight, but Dewey is quite the tenor saxophonist himself. Having apprenticed alongside Ornette Coleman, he isn't afraid of the outer limits, but he's just as likely to wrap his broad tone around a sturdy standard or a bebop jaunt. Haerter is a Swiss guitarist out of the John Scofield school. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Jazz, mirrors, and a gift shop. April 3-7: Gerry Mulligan's passing last year still hangs heavy over the city where his vivacious and witty presence instantly enlivened any bandstand he was on. Two of the legendary baritone saxophonist's most simpatico partners, trombonist **BOB BROOKMEYER** and altoist **LEE KONITZ,** join trumpeter **RANDY BRECKER** and Mulligan's last rhythm section—pianist **TED ROSENTHAL,** bassist **DEAN JOHNSON,** and drummer **RON VINCENT**—in a tribute to the esteemed soloist, composer, and arranger. Opening the evening is tenor saxophonist **HOLLY SLATER,** Britain's 1996 Young Musician of the Year. Starting April 8: The **ELVIN JONES REUNION BAND.** Dining.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and **BARBARA COOK,** accompanied by **WALLY HARPER,** her longtime pianist and arranger, in a tribute to Oscar Hammerstein II. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, pianist **PETER MINTUN** is in charge.

Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through April 6: **TOM SCOTT'S L.A. EXPRESS.** What has saxophonist Scott been up to since his glory days as one of the reigning fusioneers of the seventies? No doubt maintaining the skills that often allowed him to transcend the fern-bar funkiness of the genre. From April 8: **CLARK TERRY AND THE HARRY (SWEETS) EDISON ALL-STARS.** Mondays belong to national treasure **LES PAUL.** Dining.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—An April 2 showcase for the brilliant drummer and bandleader **BOBBY PREVITE** will feature two of his unconventional aggregations: **LATIN FOR TRAVELLERS,** a new-jazz unit, and **THE HORSE THEY RODE IN ON,** a group that celebrates the groundbreaking sounds of early fusion, when risk rather than rampant virtuosity was the music's raison d'être. April 8: **JOHN LURIE AND THE LOUNGE LIZARDS.**

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—The great cabaret in the sky. Chameleonic soprano **KT SULLIVAN** is in for a three-week stay, with her tribute "Ladies of the Silver Screen." . . . ¶ Across the hall, in the Rainbow Room, there's a revolving dance floor, plus swinging big-band music courtesy of the Rainbow Room Orchestra, featuring vocalists Sean Mahony and Claudette Sierra. Closed Mondays.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—A jazz outpost where the musicians are always top-shelf. Through April 6: Tenor saxophonist **BENNY GOLSON,** with his brawny tone, full-throttle energy, and impeccable credentials (the Jazztet, Blakey's Jazz Messengers), is a genuine hard-bop hero. He's also one of the finest jazz composers, with at least three classics to his name: "I Remember Clifford," "Whisper Not," and "Stablemates." He visits the city only occasionally, and in a typical rousing set he reminds New Yorkers what they've been missing. From April 8: The **CRAIG HANDY** quartet. Dining.

Village Gate, 240 W. 52nd St. (307-5252)—April 3-5: The **TAD SHULL** quartet. April 7: The Czech-American duo of **MARTIN KRATOCHVIL** (piano) and **TONY ACKERMAN** (guitar).

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The world's most famous jazz club is also the last place in town that still looks and feels like a classic jazz club: subterranean and thick with the spirits of past masters—though, alas, no longer smoky. Through April 6: The **ROY HARGROVE** sextet. Feisty, historically aware, and blessed with a brassy, ringing tone, Hargrove is a trumpeter who has everything except a defining personality. But he's young yet, and his boundless energy bodes well for the future. On April 7, the **ROY HARGROVE BIG BAND** gives the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra a breather.

Visiones, 125 Macdougal St., at W. 3rd St. (673-5576)—A tiny, low-key supper club where the jazz, like the Spanish-American cuisine, can take on a spicy, multicultural flavor. Through April 5: The **DAVID LIEBMAN** trio. Liebman has tamed the beast. One of the handful of players brave enough to make the recalcitrant soprano saxophone his main horn (it's been the saxophonist's standard double ever since Coltrane picked it up in 1961), he has fashioned an uncommonly intelligent approach that avoids both the facileness and the modal banality that, in the hands of others, seem to be endemic to the instrument.

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—Through April 5: **ROGER KELLAWAY** is at the piano and **JAY LEONHART** is on bass. Dining.

ROCK, ETC.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—April 2: Country crooner **SUZY BOGGUSS.** April 3: Possibly the best country singer-songwriter since Roseanne Cash, **KIM RICHEY** has a saucy voice and a harsh sense of humor. April 4: Call **JEFFREY GAINES** an angry but sensitive young man. His brisk melodies and taut, driving arrangements recall singer-songwriters of the post-punk era, but his earnest lyrics are more evocative of James Taylor than of Elvis Costello. April 5: An evening of "no-risk" listening, devoted to lesser-known artists who deserve national exposure: Dennis Brennan, Mila Drumke, Hamell on Trial, and Natalie MacMaster.

Brownies, 169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—April 3: Rock with **RED RED MEAT** and **THE LILYS.** April 5: Diaristic folk with **KAIA.**

Chicago B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—Dedicated to the music of the Windy City. West Side stylist **LUTHER (GUITAR JR.) JOHNSON** is in on April 4. Drummer **BUDDY MILES** takes over April 5.

Fez, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—April 4: Folky country-pop with the **SCHRAMMS.** April 5: **LAZY BOY.** This New York trio makes guitar-driven, noirish instrumental music that recalls the work of Chris Isaak (minus the vocals, of course) and of Angelo Badalamenti (particularly for David Lynch's creepy movie "Wild at Heart"). The guitar drips with secret-agent echo, the bass murmurs and pleads brokenheartedly, and the snare drum cracks with

Spartan authority—an evocative soundtrack for your own private movie. April 8: Veteran narrative-spinner **PETER BLEGVAD**. The **MINGUS BIG BAND** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

The Greatest Bar on Earth, 1 World Trade Center (524-7000)—Inaugurating the Strato-Lounge series are the "suave and sybaritic" (by their own description) **COMBUSTIBLE EDISON** (April 3-4), the most convincing of the current cocktail-lounge sophisticates. Their music is a kitschy libation consisting of equal parts vibraphone, Farfisa organ, melodica, bossa-nova bongos, surf guitar (played by a besuited James Bond type called the Millionaire), and torchy vocals courtesy of Miss Lily Banquette.

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—April 2: **STEVE EARLE** has had the kind of life that makes for riveting song material, a fact that may explain why his "Ellis Unit One" stands out on the soundtrack to "Dead Man Walking." The pain and fear he's singing about are in his bones. Having emerged in 1986 as a new-traditionalist country-rock rebel, he's continually edged toward tougher territory, and on his latest disk, "I Feel Alright," he has got it down pat. The songs are spare, gritty, and—unlike the ones on his guitar-cluttered early-nineties albums—dirty to the core. And his ravaged voice can make even the thickest-skinned listener tremble. April 4: The tie-dyed sounds of **MOE.** April 5: **FROM GOOD HOMES.** April 7: Grab your spats, we're gonna cut a rug! In their original compositions—which they and their growing legions refer to as "hot music"—the **SQUIRREL NUT ZIPPERS** deliriously resurrect and mix up the spirits of Cab Calloway, Fats Waller, Kid Ory, and Billie Holiday. Formal attire is not called for (unless it makes you more comfortable). With **CIGAR STORE INDIANS.**

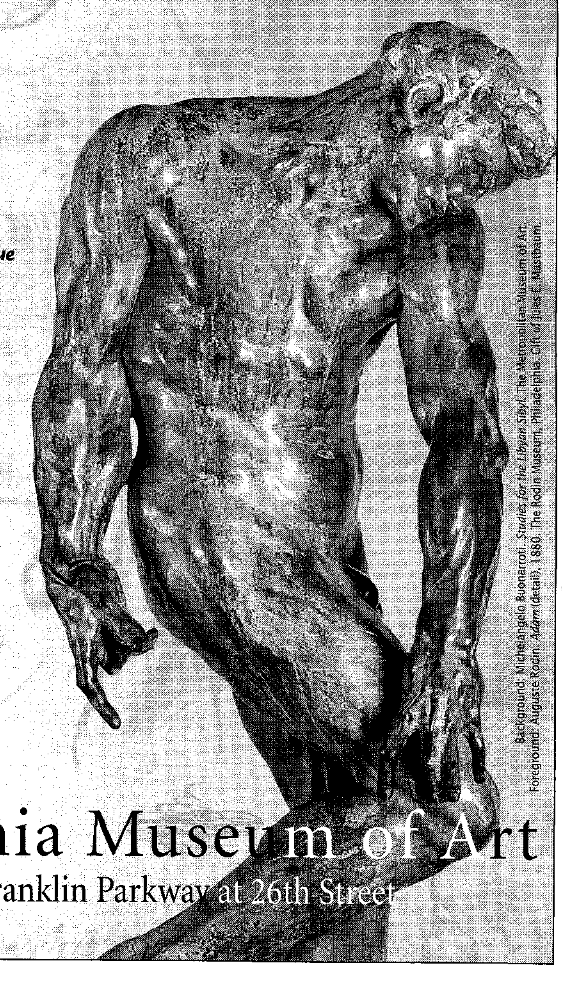
Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—April 3: Indie rock with **BEDHEAD, WINDSOR FOR THE DERBY,** and **HOME.** April 4: Singer-songwriter **PETER BLEGVAD** (see Fez) plays solo, and free-jazz and downtown-rock drummer **WILLIAM HOOKER** teams up with with Sonic Youth guitarist **LEE RANALDO** and prolific art-jazz rocker **ZEENA PARKINS.** April 6: Tibetan singer **YUNGCHEN LHAMO.**

Manny's Car Wash, 1558 Third Ave., at 87th St. (369-2583)—The Upper East Side blues. April 2: Harmonica prodigy (he's thirteen) **BRODY BUSTER.** April 3: They say the blues is all about heart, a notion to think about when guitarist **JOHNNY (CLYDE) COPELAND** makes his first appearance since his heart transplant on New Year's Day.

Mercury Lounge, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—April 2: The **DIVERS,** a Police-meets-Oingo Boingo-flavored combo featuring former members of White Trash. April 3: Rocking surf sounds from **LOS STRAITJACKETS.** April 5: The Lower East Side post-punk stylings of **MADDER ROSE.**

S.O.B.'s, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—A great grass hut with a fruit-and-bamboo motif, dedicated to calypso, reggae, and the bossa nova. April 2: Latin jazz with **NESTOR TORRES.** Dining.

Tramps, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—April 2: **BLOODHOUND GANG** and **NERF HERDER.** April 3: And you thought art rock was dead. On "Rising," her powerful recent disk, **YOKO ONO** gives voice to a host of repressed emotions that must have been brewing since the death of John Lennon. Her liner notes, which draw parallels between her childhood in Japan during the Second World War and her current life in AIDS-ravaged New York, are some of the most eloquent prose you'll find in a rock album. On the same bill is further proof of Ono's ongoing influence: the Japanese duo **CIBO MATTO,** which churns out kitschy broken-English raps about food ("Beef Jerky," "White Pepper Ice Cream") over a sonic bricolage that jams together some of the most strikingly original sounds that have ever found their way onto a record. The group's stunning (if occasionally grating) new EP, "Super Relax," is one of this year's must-have disks. Postmodern guitar heroes **MARC RIBOT** and **ARTO LINDSAY** round out the evening's remarkable roster.



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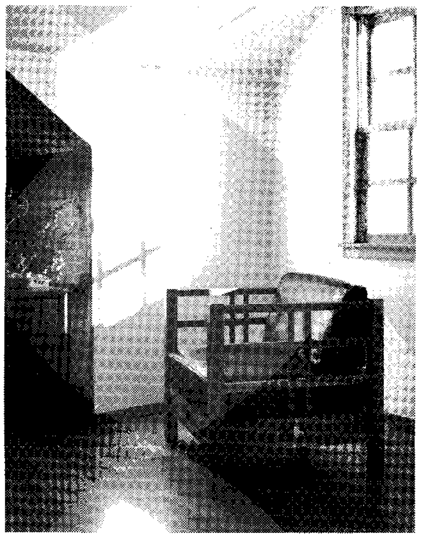
Background: Michelangelo Buonarroti. *Studies for the Libyan Sibyl.* The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
Foreground: Auguste Rodin. *Adam* (detail), 1880. The Rodin Museum, Philadelphia. Gift of Jules E. Mastbaum.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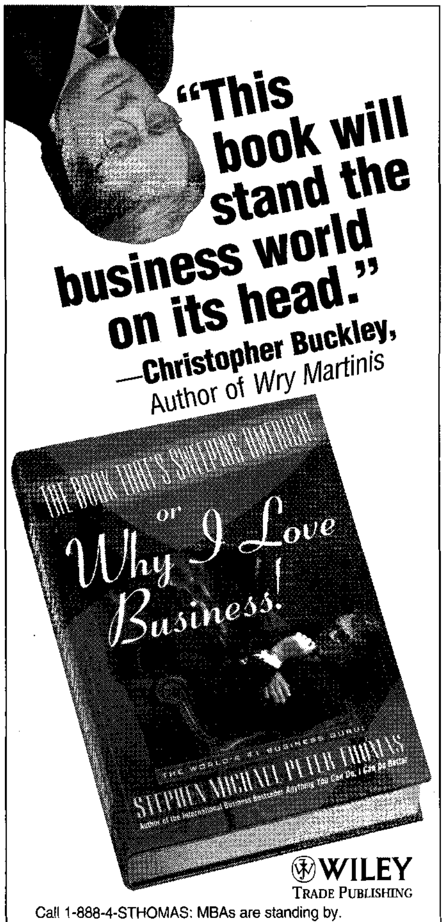

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ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—"The Glory of Byzantium" is the museum's most spectacular exhibition in years, a colossal exploration of the art, history, and thought of what is known as the Second Golden Age of Byzantium, an era of unsurpassed imperial opulence which lasted from the mid-ninth century to the thirteenth. You could ransom the emperor of the Incas with the gold here: crowns, jewelry, books, a reliquary with splinters of the true cross, all stunningly wrought and dripping with gems. The array of lenders attests to an amazing feat of museology. In one particularly poignant juxtaposition, two frescoes of saints and angels from Damascus hang next to a similar piece from Jerusalem: the Met, at least, has succeeded in bringing Syria and Israel together. Through July 6. . . . ¶ "Giambattista Tiepolo." This ravishing assembly—more than sixty works, mostly paintings—strongly suggests that the eighteenth-century Venetian master, a pivot between the baroque and the rococo, is due for a fin-de-siècle reëvaluation. Through April 27. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—In an age of digital art, the humble collage can seem deceptively tame. Yet "The Photomontages of Hannah Höch" proves that the artist's imagination needs nothing more than scissors and a pot of glue—and stacks of newspapers and magazines. Through May 20. . . . ¶ "Willem de Kooning: The Late Paintings, the 1980s." Forty examples from the Abstract Expressionist's final working decade. Through April 29. . . . ¶ "Manuel Alvarez Bravo." The great Mexican photographer's career spans eight decades; this retrospective visits all of them and includes rare platinum prints he made in the sixties from earlier negatives. The earliest works alternate between elegant abstractions and intensely emotional reportage; a photograph from 1934 shows a beautiful young striker moments after his assassination, the blood still pouring from his head. In 1938, Bravo met André Breton and began dabbling in Surrealism; in one of his most famous works, "The Good Reputation Sleeping," a nude woman with bandaged thighs slumbers amid tiny cacti. Through May 18. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 8:30.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—"A Century of Sculpture: The Nasher Collection" features work by Brancusi, Giacometti, Matisse, Smith, and other twentieth-century artists. Through June 1. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Guggenheim Museum SoHo, 575 Broadway, at Prince St. (423-3500)—"Art/Fashion" presents garments and other piecework designed by visual artists. Through June 8. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Saturday evenings until 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—Clearly, the curators of the 1997 Biennial exhibition, Lisa Phillips and Louise Neri, have determined not to make the same mistakes as their immediate predecessors. In contradistinction to the haranguing 1993 show, with its noisy emphasis on identity politics, they have stressed a more poetic (or more palatable?) approach to social issues—e.g., Wendy Ewald's photographs (which attempt to depict the dreams of underprivileged children) and Shazia Sikander's updated Persian miniatures (which investigate, for example, the place of women in a traditional society); the downside is that political engagement of any kind gets lost. And these curators propound a more sharply delineated vision than the old-hat eclecticism of the 1995 show. This Biennial is, on the whole, hipper and smarter. The emphasis is on theatrical installations, many with pronounced son-et-lumière effects. Beginning, on the fourth floor, with Glen Seator's extraordinary scale model of the Whitney director's office, tilted at a forty-five-degree angle, and working you way down, you are treated to numerous piece that challenge your relation to the surrounding space. The show isn't interactive; rather, i acts upon you, either aggressively, as in Pau McCarthy's lobby installation, with its deranged and filthy Santa Claus, or, more often, hypnotically, as in the projected-vide installations of Bruce Nauman and Dian Thater. What the show lacks—and no doub lacks deliberately—is any sense of clearl articulated argument. Through June 1. (Ope Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

American Museum of Natural History, Centra Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—"Endangered! Exploring a World at Risk," an exhibition devoted to vanishing and extinct species. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"Rediscovering James Brooks: W.P.A. Murals and Other Figural Works." Through May 11. . . . ¶ "Mistress of the House, Mistress of Heaven: Women in Ancient Egypt" presents amulets, jewelry, statues, painted mummy cases, and other objects, everyday and sacred. Through May 18. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

American Craft Museum, 40 W. 53rd St. (956-3535)—"Beatrice Wood: A Centennial Tribute" celebrates Wood's second career, as a ceramist. The San Francisco centenarian was part of the New York Dada circle in the teens, exhibiting her paintings alongside those of Duchamp, Man Ray, and Picabia. A few of her works from that era may be seen here, but this exhibition concentrates on the iridescent gold- and copper-glazed vessels that have been her signature since she took up the craft, at forty, in 1933. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 8; Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, Fifth Ave. at 91st St. (860-6894)—The products designed by Henry Dreyfuss (1904-72) were once so pervasive as to be nearly invisible: the Round thermostat, the TouchTone and Princess telephones, the Hoover vacuum cleaner with the streamlined locomotive sweeplight. The museum has collected drawings, models, prototypes, and products sure to evoke longings you thought you had outgrown—for Polaroid Swingers, perhaps, or red John Deere Model L tractors. Through Aug. 17. . . . ¶ "*Disegno*: Italian Renaissance Designs for Decorative Arts." Through May 18. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 9, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

Jewish Museum, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (423-3200)—"Bordering on Fiction: Chantal Akerman's 'D'Est,' " a film-and-video installation chronicling the artist's trip through reunified Germany and Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Through May 27. (Open Sundays through Thursdays, 11 to 5:45, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Museum for African Art, 593 Broadway, at Houston St. (966-1313)—"Art That Heals: The Image as Medicine in Ethiopia" and "To Cure and Protect: Sickness and Health in African Art," related exhibitions that include parchment healing scrolls, talismanic paintings by clerics of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, masks, amulets, and divination tools from Zaire, Tanzania, Burkina Faso, and other sub-Saharan countries. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10:30 to 5:30; Saturdays, noon to 8; Sundays, noon to 6.)

National Museum of the American Indian, 1 Bowling Green (668-6624)—"Agayuliyararput (Our Way of Making Prayer): The Living Tradition of Yup'ik Masks," an exhibition of elaborate masks from southwestern Alaska. The majority were collected in the late nineteenth century; the current show, which opened in Toksook Bay and Bethel, Alaska, was created in consultation with those Yup'ik communities. (Open daily, 10 to 5, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

New-York Historical Society, 2 W. 77th St., at Central Park W. (873-3400)—"Before Central Park: The Life and Death of Seneca Village," an exhibition devoted to the African-American and Irish community that was razed to make way for Central Park, includes a re-creation of one of its streets (85th Street, near Sixth Avenue), histories of some typical residents (Andrew Williams, bootblack; Epiphany Davis, porter), and a reference center at which museumgoers can follow the subsequent genealogies of Seneca Village families. . . . ¶ "The Birds of America," a hundred and fifty watercolors by John James Audubon. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. (869-8089)—"Let There Be Light: William Tyndale and the Making of the English Bible" assembles artifacts—including both of the known copies of his 1526 edition of the New Testament—that chronicle the life and surprising demise of this translator, who was burned at the stake as a heretic for his efforts. Gottesman Exhibition Hall; through May 17. (Open Mondays, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

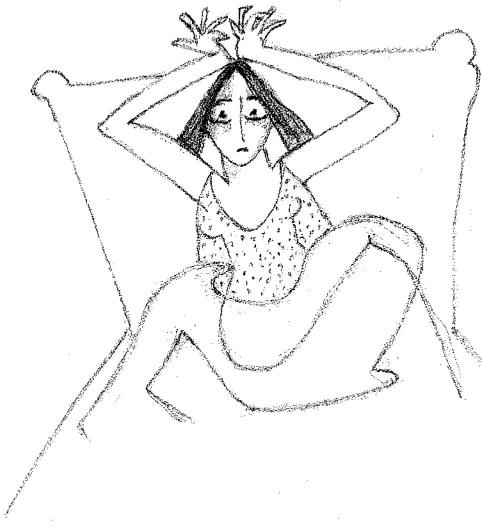
(Unless otherwise noted, uptown and downtown galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; Chelsea galleries are generally closed Tuesdays and open Sundays.)

Joe Brainard (1942-94)—A mini retrospective of works by a writer and painter who deserves a far wider audience. What unified his art—paintings of his sleeping dog, a tenderly pathetic picture of a bouquet of pansies, an ink drawing of a cup of coffee—was his sweet and attentive temperament. Many of the canvases continue the realist tradition and the coloristic bravado of Post-Impressionism, but they also have a Pop side—something like early Warhols and Lichtensteins, but without their cool irony. Brainard approached all his subjects, whether commercial icons or intimate mementos of hearth and home, with the same ingenuous curiosity and affection. Does this sound unsophisticated? It isn't. Through April 19. (De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 262-5050.)

Alice Neel (1900-84)—"Paintings from the Thirties," an extraordinary show of early works from a period when the artist was still experimenting with various styles. Her characteristically precise yet sympathetic observation is abundantly evident in several of the portraits. At the same time, she borrows freely, and often successfully, from social realism, Expressionism, and Surrealism. "Movie Lobby" (1932) is decidedly uncharacteristic, yet its brilliant pinks and its spatial exaggeration are wonderful. The most extraordinary image must be the famous nude portrait of Joe Gould, impressively endowed with three penises. Through April 12. (Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. 980-5454.)

Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848-1933)—An exquisite selection of works demonstrating that the great American glass artist was more of a revolutionary than most people think. The familiar fruit-and-flower lampshades are as glorious as ever; a series of gracefully composed vases in iridescent pastels are far ahead of their time. In two windows representing the seasons, several panes are overlaid to create a deep sense of space and rich—at times almost funky—coloristic effects. Through April 26. (McCoy, 41 E. 57th St. 319-1966. Open Mondays.)

Short List—**jean-michel basquiat and andy warhol,** Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. 744-2313. Through April 26. . . . **alan davie,** ACA, 41 E. 57th St. 644-8300. Through April 5. . . . **niki de saint phalle,** Rickards, 1045 Madison Ave., at 79th St. 924-0858. Through April 19. . . . **james havard,** Stone, 113 E. 90th St. 987-1655. Through April 26. . . . **bryan hunt,** Boone, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 752-2929. Through April 21. . . . **bill jacklin,** Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. 541-4900. Open Mondays; through April 5. . . . **william king,** Dintenfass, 20 E. 79th St. 581-2268. Through April 26. . . . **käthe kollwitz** and **lea grundig,** Galerie St. Etienne, 24 W. 57th St. 245-6734. Through May 31. . . . **louise nevelson,** Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 431-9224. Through April 26. . . . **mary petty,** Syracuse University's Lubin House, 11 E. 61st St. 826-0320. Through April 28. . . . **ellen phelan,** Danese, 41 E. 57th St. 223-2227. Through April 19. . . . **katherine porter,** Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. 879-6606. Open Mondays; through April 26. . . . **richard stankiewicz,** Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 752-1223. Through May 3. . . . **christopher wilmarth,** Janis, 110 W. 57th St. 586-0110. Through April 19.



Self-portrait by Beatrice Wood, whose ceramic works are on view at the American Craft Museum.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Robert Gober—Works on paper and small sculptures featuring many of the artist's signature motifs: distorted sinks and cribs, sticks of butter, anatomical displacements (e.g., a leg protruding from a vagina). As in the gallery's concurrent Andres Serrano show, the recurrent themes are sexuality and transgression, but Gober works through indirection and metaphor rather than nuts-and-bolts depiction. Through April 12. (Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 255-1105. Open Tuesdays, closed Sundays.)

Ilya Kabakov—For "The Life of Flies," an impressive multipart installation by the Russian artist (who now makes his home in New York), the Gladstone gallery has been transformed into something like the gloomy, decrepit provincial museums of the former Soviet Union. Through April 5. (515 W. 24th St. 206-9300.)

Group Show—An inaugural exhibition whose wildly theatrical centerpiece is Louise Bourgeois's enormous walk-through steel "Spider" (1996). The gallery has also assembled Jenny Holzer's early "Living Series" (1980-82), metal plaques embossed with often sardonic texts in red and black. Alice Neel's portrait of a smiling Bella Abzug, her arms extended in welcome, hangs over the desk. Through April 5. (Cheim & Read, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727.)

Short List—**doug aitken,** 303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-1121. Through April 26. . . . **nayland blake,** Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 243-0200. Through April 26. . . . **linda burnham,** Fredericks, 504 W. 22nd St. 633-6555. Through April 20. . . . **rachel harrison,** Greene Naftali, 526 W. 26th St. 463-7770. Through April 20. . . . **maxine henryson and hunter reynolds,** Kirkland, 504 W. 22nd St. 627-3930. Through April 13. . . . **archie rand,** Baldacci, 521 W. 21st St. 463-0919. Through April 12. . . . **mike sale,** XL, 504 W. 22nd St. 462-4111. Through April 27. . . . **joe scanlan,** D'Amelio Terras, 525 W. 22nd St. 352-9460. Through April 26. . . . **lincoln tobier,** Hearn, 530 W. 22nd St. 727-7366. Through April 13.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Elizabeth Peyton—New paintings by a young artist who favors images of rock stars, royalty, and her friends, which, in standard postmodern fashion, she draws from photographs. Her technique, though, is nothing if not painterly, with colors so rich and lambent that the pictures seem to glow from within. Among the stars here: Liam and Noel Gallagher, of the British band Oasis; the young Elvis Presley beside Gladys, the mother he adored; and the alternative star Beck, whose three-quarter-length portrait is the largest image in a show of predominantly small works. Not to be missed. Through April 12. (Gavin Brown's Enterprise, 558 Broome St. 431-1512. Closed Tuesdays.)

Frank Stella—The sculptural has always been an important aspect of the artist's work; even his early paintings have an object-like quality. Of these two new monumental sculptures, which represent yet a further stage in his evolution, one seems to flirt with representation—it looks rather like a ruined rocket or jet fuselage—and the other is nothing short of stunning: a bizarre, Medusan coil of metal, vaguely reminiscent of the mad chapeaus that the British milliner Philip Tracey has been sending down the London and Paris runways. Through April 26. (Gagosian, 136 Wooster St. 228-2828.)

Nicola Tyson—Paintings by an artist who first came to attention as a dealer in the early nineties, when she devoted her short-lived but influential Trial Balloon Gallery to new art by women. If these paintings lack the singular power of her smaller works on paper, there's still enough in them to make her idiosyncratic vision convincing. Like a lot of other contemporary painters, she's irresistibly drawn to the Surrealist biomorph; but, whereas Terry Winters and Carroll Dunham take their inspiration from semi-abstraction (Matta, Gorky, Miró), she elaborates on the figurative wing of Surrealism. The potential for violence and metamorphosis remains subdued in her truncated, mutated figures. Perhaps the most interesting thing about her recent work, though, is her apparent retreat from the mechanics of sexuality. Through April 26. (Petzel, 26 Wooster St. 334-9466.)

Short List—**l. c. armstrong,** Bravin Post Lee, 80 Mercer St. 966-2676. Through April 10. . . . **skip arnold,** Brownstone, 39 Wooster St. 334-3455. Through April 19. . . . **meg cranston,** Boesky & Callery, 51 Greene St. 941-9888. Through April 18. . . . **lena cronqvist,** Nordanstad, 289 Hudson St. 627-6628. Through April 26. . . . **enzo cucchi,** Shafrazi, 119 Wooster St. 274-9300. Through April 19. . . . **mark greenwold,** Kind, 136 Greene St. 925-1200. Through April 15. . . . **dan griggs,** Cacciola, 125 Wooster St. 966-9177. Through April 19. . . . **jane hammond,** Luhring Augustine, 130 Prince St. 219-9600. Through April 26. . . . **robert mangold,** Pace Wildenstein, 142 Greene St. 431-9224. Through April 26. . . . **karl mann,** Ricco/Maresca, 152 Wooster St. 780-0071. Through April 12. . . . **luigi ontani,** Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St. 431-3685. Through April 26. . . . **roxy paine,** Feldman, 31 Mercer St. 226-3232. Through April 26. . . . **jason rhoades,** Zwirner, 43 Greene St. 966-9074. Through April 26. . . . **miriam schapiro,** Steinbaum Krauss, 132 Greene St. 431-4224. Through April 26. . . . **nikko sedgwick,** Dillon, 431 West Broadway. 966-2977. Through April 21. . . . **keith sonnier,** Castelli, 420 West Broadway. 431-5160. Also at Klagsbrun, 80 Mercer St. 925-5157. Both shows through April 26.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Christie's—April 2: European and American decorative art. . . . ¶ April 4: Rugs. . . . ¶ April 8: Jewelry. (Park Ave. at 59th St. 546-1000.) . . . ¶ At **christie's east:** April 2: Modestly priced decorative art. (219 E. 67th St. 606-0400.)

Sotheby's—April 5: Fine and collectible wines. . . . ¶ April 7-8: A sale of jewelry and haute couture, including items from the estate of fashion maven Martha Philips and an Art Deco diamond bracelet that belonged to Joan Crawford. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

Coliseum Antiques Show—A gardening motif dominates this year's installment, but there's plenty for black-thumb types to dig through, too. (Coliseum, Columbus Circle. April 5-6. For information, call 255-0020.)

Literary Treasures—A benefit auction of items relating to contemporary literature, from signed galleys and working drafts to such curiosities as a wooden parrot autographed by Julian Barnes. (Stubbs Inc., 330 E. 59th St., sixth floor. April 3 at 6:30. For reservations, call 536-5672.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

Manuel Alvarez Bravo—At the **museum of modern art,** a retrospective includes rare prints from the Mexican master's personal archive. Through May 18 (see Museums). . . . ¶ At **throckmorton,** forty prints by the artist and his first wife, Lola Alvarez Bravo. (153 E. 61st St. 223-1059. Through May 3.) . . . ¶ At **witkin,** ninety-five prints (including some vintage color) from 1927 to 1996, along with photographs by Colette Alvarez Urbajtel, who married Alvarez Bravo in 1959. (415 West Broadway. 925-5510. Through May 3.)

Lois Conner—The artist brings her beautiful platinum-palladium tonal range to bear on more contemplative, less exotic images than the ones in her works from the Far East: broad landscapes and portraits of Native Americans from the desert Southwest. The panoramic format she uses for most of the portraits subtly marries the Navajos to their land. Through April 19. (Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. 226-1220.)

William Eggleston—Twenty recently made dye-transfer prints of photographs from the seventies. An Eggleston show is always a must for votaries of color, and the images here—a gaggle of bowling trophies on a cigarette machine, a red-sweatered little boy by the side of the road, a Cadillac hoodful of baby dolls—are worthy of a pilgrimage. Through April 12. (Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. 980-5454.)

Michael Kenna—Jewel-like images of bridges in Paris and Prague, the windmills of La Mancha, and the seventeenth-century gardens of André Lenôtre. Kenna was the darling of this year's Association of International Photography Art Dealers show a few weeks ago, and for good reason: his black-and-white visions strike an elegant balance between the formal and the mysterious qualities of the altered landscape. Through April 26. (Mann, 42 E. 76th St. 570-1223.)

Saul Leiter—Muted color views, mostly of New York in the nineteen-fifties, by one of our foremost black-and-white photographers. The nearly washed-out palette takes getting used to, but the images—snowy streets, a languid nude woman asleep on a porch—soon begin to glow with a painterly confidence. Through April 5. (Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010.)

Joe Marvullo / Sid Kaplan—Color images made over the past ten years in the Far East, Central America, and the United States. / "New York in the Fifties," an affecting exhibit of black-and-white images—a Teddy bear poking out of a boy's backpack in Grand Central Terminal, couples on the Staten Island Ferry the morning after the prom—by a master printer who has done work for the Capas, Robert Frank, Allen Ginsberg, and Weegee. Both shows through April 5. (Leica, 670 Broadway. 777-3051. Opens Saturdays at noon.)

Andrea Modica—These documentarylike portraits (the artist calls them "fictions"), mostly of children in rural Treadwell, New York, reveal the terrors of domestic discomfort with startling ease. Here, a boy stands near an overturned wading pool, hugging a tree; elsewhere, Barbara (Modica's most frequent subject) stands in a doorway, upset or just tired, staring reproachfully at the camera. Through April 19. (Houk Friedman, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. 628-5300.)

Barbara Morgan (1900-92)—She's better known for her matchless portraits of Martha Graham at work (and José Limon and Merce Cunningham), but Morgan's relatively overlooked experimental montages and light drawings are rewarding, too. "Glass Circle Rayogram" (1945), a smooth gray circle inside a black ring, is perfectly minimalist; the montage "3rd Avenue El" (1936) captures the steel pride of a growing city. Through April 5. (Gallery 292, 120 Wooster St. 431-0292.)

Harry Roseman—Photographs of Joseph Cornell at work between 1970 and 1972. (The photographer was his last studio assistant.) (Davis & Langdale, 231 E. 60th St. 838-0333.)

Ezra Stoller / Weegee (1899-1968)—Crystal-clear, highly satisfying views of architectural landmarks designed by Wright, Saarinen, Johnson, Mies van der Rohe, Breuer, Kahn, and others. / Classic photojournalism. Both shows through April 12. (Danziger, 130 Prince St. 226-0056.)

Jindrich Styrsky (1899-1942)—"Emilie Comes to Me in a Dream," pornographic collages and photomontages by the Czech avant-gardist. Also on view are erotic photographs and collages by Hans Bellmer, Janusz Maria Brzeski, Georges Hugnet, and André Racz. Through May 3. (Ubu, 16 E. 78th St. 794-4444.)

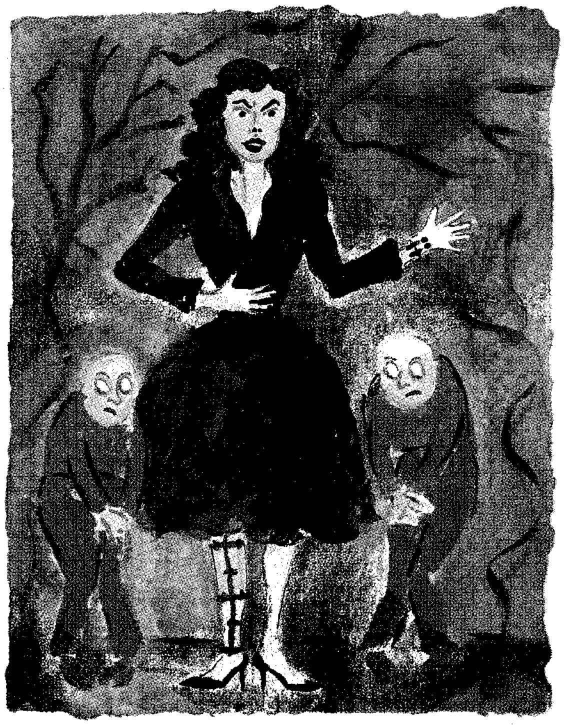
"Brooklyn, New York, U.S.A."—A salon-style presentation of more than seventy works from the turn of the century to the present, by such disparate artists as Nat Fein, Vincent Cianni, Benn Mitchell, Louis Stettner, Kim Iacono, Berenice Abbott, and William Klein. Through May 3. (Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 517-3766.)

Group Show—The second exhibition at the Cortland Jessup gallery features works by Bruce Cratsley, Jan Saudek, Imogen Cunningham, and Carol Westwood. Through April 16. (670 Broadway. 533-7333. Closed Tuesdays; opens at noon.)

International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. (860-1777)—"Art & Science: Investigating Matter," a series of laboratory photographs by Catherine Wagner. Through June 15. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

International Center of Photography Midtown, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. (860-1777)—"Written in Memory: Portraits of the Holocaust," Jeffrey A. Wolin's images of survivors with handwritten texts on the surfaces of the prints. Through April 20. . . . ¶ "War Story," an installation by Mikael Levin. Through April 20. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Short List—**mark abramson,** Camera Club, 853 Broadway, at 14th St. 260-7077. Opens at noon; through April 23. . . . **michael ackerman,** Bodell, 13 E. 7th St. 477-1820. Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 1 to 7; through April 27. . . . **yevgeny khaldei,** Schickler, 52 E. 76th St. 737-6647. Open Mondays; through April 26. . . . **o. winston link,** McEnroe, 41 Greene St. 219-0395. Through April 19. . . . **nic nicosia,** P.P.O.W, 532 Broadway. 941-8642. Through April 19. . . . **alison rossiter,** Morthland, 225 Tenth Ave., at 23rd St. 242-7767. Opens at noon; through April 13. . . . **andres serrano,** Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 255-1105. Open Tuesdays, closed Sundays; through April 12. . . . **frederick sommer** and **jim dine,** Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999. Both shows through April 5.



Joyce Castle, in Gottfried von Einem's "The Visit of the Old Lady," at New York City Opera.

ELIZA GRAN

CLASSICAL MUSIC

(The box-office number for Alice Tully Hall i 875-5050; for Avery Fisher Hall, 875-5030 and for Carnegie Hall and Weill Recital Hall 247-7800.)

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—**faust,** with Renée Fleming, Richard Leech, Dwayne Croft, and Samuel Ramey; conducted by Julius Rudel. (Apri 2 at 8 and April 5 at 1:30.) . . . **aida,** with Sharon Sweet, Barbara Dever, Michael Sylvester, and Frederick Burchinal; Adam Fischer (April 3 at 7:30.) . . . **madama butterfly,** with Michele Crider, Franco Farina, and Alan Opie; John Fiore. (April 4 at 8.) . . . With Walter Fraccaro instead of Mr. Farina. (April 8 at 7:30.) . . . **eugene onegin,** in a new production, with Galina Gorchakova, Marianna Tarassova, Vladimir Chernov, Clifton Forbis, and Vladimir Ognovenko; Antonio Pappano. (April 5 at 8.) . . . **die walküre,** with Hildegard Behrens, Deborah Voigt, Hanna Schwarz, Plácido Domingo, James Morris, and John Macurdy; James Levine. (April 7 at 6:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

New York City Opera—**don giovanni.** (April 2 at 8.) . . . **turandot.** (April 3 at 8 and April 6 at 1:30.) . . . A double bill of Orff's **carmina burana** and Weill's **the seven deadly sins.** (April 4 at 8.) . . . **madama butterfly.** (April 5 at 1:30.) . . . **rigoletto.** (April 5 at 8.) . . . **the visit of the old lady,** by Gottfried von Einem (with a libretto crafted by Friedrich Dürrenmatt from his acclaimed play), in the opening performance of a new production being mounted for the company's veteran mezzo-soprano Joyce Castle. (April 8 at 8.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

Opera at Columbia—In the forties and fifties, Columbia University was a hotbed of operatic creativity. This program offers concert excerpts of works (many of them premièred on campus) created during those years with the school's support: Menotti's "The Medium," Thomson's "The Mother of Us All," Beeson's "Hello Out There" and "The Sweet Bye and Bye," Britten's "Paul Bunyan," Chávez's "The Visitors," Lehman Engel's "The Malady of Love," Douglas Moore's "The Ballad of Baby Doe" and "Giants in the Earth," Robert Ward's "He Who Gets

Slapped," and Hugo Weisgall's "Six Characters in Search of an Author." Various singers assist the Friends and Enemies of New Music ensemble. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. April 6 at 3.)

Opera Orchestra of New York—Presenting a concert version of Verdi's "Ernani," with soprano June Anderson, tenor Richard Margison, baritone Carlo Guelfi, and bass Paul Plishka. Eve Queler directs. (Carnegie Hall. April 6 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—In 1911, Paris was titillated and scandalized by "Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien," a five-hour, overtly erotic, sadomasochistic spectacle that combined a play by Gabriele D'Annunzio with a score mostly by Debussy (the composer left much of the orchestration, and probably some of the actual composition, to his gifted disciple André Caplet). The notion of the Jewish exotic dancer Ida Rubinstein's portraying the third-century Christian martyr was simply de trop for the ecclesiastical authorities, who forbade Catholics to attend, thereby, of course enhancing the work's appeal. The wife of the production's chorus master created a much reduced version that preserves most of the music (which is lovely) while replacing the spoken sections with a narration that preserves the spirit, and some of the substance, of D'Annunzio's highly perfumed verse. (The original piece is presumably too unwieldy to present today, but wouldn't it make a great project for the Lincoln Center Festival?) Kurt Masur conducts this shorter version, in which the orchestra is joined by the Westminster Symphonic Choir, with soloists Maria Ewing (as narrator), soprano Elizabeth Norberg-Schulz, and mezzo-sopranos Nancy Maultsby and Mary Ann McCormick. Also on the program is Carl Orff's reworking of Monteverdi's "Lamento d'Arianna," with Ms. Ewing as the soprano soloist. (Avery Fisher Hall. April 3-5 at 8.)

Orchestra of St. Luke's—The exact centennial of Brahms's death is marked with a performance of "Ein Deutsches Requiem," with Robert Shaw directing the orchestra, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Chorus, and soloists Dawn Upshaw (soprano) and Nathan Gunn (baritone). (Carnegie Hall. April 3 at 8.)

Accademia Bizantina—The Ravenna-based ensemble offers instrumental and vocal works by Vivaldi, Albinoni, and Baldassare Galuppi. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. April 4 at 8.)

Orpheus Chamber Orchestra—The conductorless ensemble performs Rossini's String Sonata No. 5, Mozart's French Horn Concerto No. 3 (with David Jolley), and Prokofiev's Symphony No. 1 (the "Classical"). (Riverside Church, Riverside Dr. at 120th St. April 6 at 3. For information about tickets, call 678-1704.)

"A Celebration of the American Musical"—Predictable Broadway fare sung as opera stars will. On the roster: sopranos Renée Fleming and Elizabeth Futral, mezzo-sopranos Marilyn Horne and Frederica von Stade, tenor Jerry Hadley, baritone Dwayne Croft, and bass Samuel Ramey. Paul Gemignani conducts the American Theatre Orchestra. (Avery Fisher Hall. April 7 at 8.)

RECITALS

Schubertiade—The final installment of the 92nd Street Y's decade-long Schubert celebration continues. April 2 at 8: Tenor Stanford Olsen and a pianist to be announced perform "Die Schöne Müllerin." . . . ¶ April 5 at 8: "Winterreise," with performers to be announced. . . . ¶ April 6, from 1 to 6: A five-hour symposium about the composer's late works, with illustrative performances. (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. The Schubertiade concludes on April 10.)

Bargemusic—Presenting songs and chamber works by Schubert and Brahms (including the latter's C-Minor Piano Quartet). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061. April 3 at 7:30 and April 6 at 4.)

Perspectives Ensemble—The group performs instrumental and vocal music of Villa-Lobos, with commentary interspersed. (St. Paul's Chapel, Columbia University; enter at Broadway at 116th St. 854-1540. April 3 at 8.)

Diane Walsh—Pianist, performing Chopin's Twelve Études (Op. 25), Crumb's "Makrokosmos" (Volume 1), three Préludes by Debussy, and the première of Nathan Currier's "Étude-Chaconne." (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. April 3 at 8.)

Cavani String Quartet—The foursome plays quartets by Mendelssohn (in F Minor), Ellen Taaffe Zwilich (her First), and Schumann (in A Major, Op. 41, No. 3). (Weill Recital Hall. April 4 at 8.)

Lisa Terry—The viola-da-gamba player and colleagues from the Concert Royal ensemble offer French Baroque works. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 355-6160. April 4 at 8.)

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center—Violinist Ani Kavafian joins the Beaux Arts Trio (whose violinist is her sister, Ida) in a program that comprises Schumann's A-Minor Violin Sonata, Mozart's G-Minor Piano Quartet, several duets by Bartók, and Brahms's C-Major Piano Trio (Op. 87). (Alice Tully Hall. April 4 at 8 and April 6 at 5.)

Murray Perahia—The pianist performs Handel's E-Major Suite (which contains the well-known "Harmonious Blacksmith" Variations) and G-Major Chaconne, as well as works by Schumann (his "Kreisleriana"), Schubert (his A-Major Sonata, D. 664), and Chopin (including his Scherzo No. 1). (Carnegie Hall. April 5 at 7:30.)

Guarneri Quartet—Playing string quartets by Haydn (in D Major, Op. 20, No. 4), Berg (Op. 3), and Dvořák (Op. 96, the "American"). (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. April 5 at 8.)

"Bach at the Beacon"—Few composers survive transcription as well as Bach does. He provided the precedent himself, often rewriting his own works to suit new purposes, and he had no compunction about transcribing music he admired by his contemporaries, turning Vivaldi string concertos, for example, into organ solos. In later centuries, his music has popped up in all manner of transmogrifications, with arrangers cozying up to within a hyphen's-width of the Leipzig master: Bach-Gounod, Bach-Busoni, Bach-Stokowski, and so on. In this mini-festival—not, on the whole, an event for purists—notable reinterpreters of Bach rub elbows with musicians who hew to more literal readings. April 5 at 8: Wendy Carlos, who, in 1968, made electronic-music history with her best-selling recording "Switched-On Bach," performs live (for the first time ever), with seven colleagues (including Larry Fast and Gloria Chang), each playing on a separate Kurzweil synthesizer; pianist Jacques Loussier, renowned for his cool-jazz renditions of Bach, appears in his first public performance in town in twenty-five years, as part of a trio; and harpsichordist Anthony Newman leads the Brandenburg Collegium Ensemble in a program that includes the C-Major Orchestral Suite and the E-Major Violin Concerto (featuring violinist Sergiu Luca). . . . ¶ April 6 at 2: Clarinettist Richard Stoltzman, with double-bassist Eddie Gomez and pianist Bill Douglas, gives Bach the crossover treatment; Marion Verbruggen plays recorder transcriptions of three of Bach's flute sonatas (assisted by Mr. Newman); the Jacques Loussier Trio offers more of its Bachian jazz; and members of the Bach Aria Group offer cantata movements pretty much as the composer wrote them. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. For information about tickets, call 307-7171.) . . . **Note:** On April 4 at 6:30, Messrs. Loussier and Newman join Nina Wemyss, staff historian of Robert Mondavi Winery (which is sponsoring the event), for a free lecture-performance on "Bach and Bacchus," at Barnes & Noble, Broadway at 66th St.

Bo Skovhus—The Danish baritone performs songs by Haydn, Schumann (the "Liederkreis," Op. 24), Peter Erasmus Lange-Müller, and Strauss; pianist Warren Jones assists. (Alice Tully Hall. April 6 at 2.)

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New York Philharmonic Ensembles—Members of the orchestra, plus several guests, perform chamber works by Locatelli, Joseph Jongen, Vaughan Williams, and Janáček (his String Quartet No. 2). (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. April 6 at 3.)

Anonymous 4—The distaff vocal quartet performs "A Lammas Ladymass," a medieval English votive Mass for the Virgin Mary, with period readings interspersed. Presented by Music Before 1800. (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. 666-9266. April 6 at 4.)

Iris Regev—Cellist, with pianist Paul Schwartz, performing Bach's G-Minor Viola da Gamba Sonata, Beethoven's A-Major Sonata, and Chopin's Polonaise Brilliante. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. April 6 at 6 and 8. No tickets necessary.)

Sergio Fiorentino—The pianist was already launched on a promising career when, in 1954, while on tour in South America, he suffered a spinal injury in a plane crash. After his recovery he pursued a teaching career in Naples for forty years before contemplating a serious return to the stage. His recent performances and recordings have elicited enthusiastic comment. For his first New York appearance in more than four decades, he has programmed the Bach-Busoni "St. Anne" Prelude and Fugue, as well as sonatas by Beethoven ("Les Adieux"), Scriabin (his Second), and Rachmaninoff (his Second). (Alice Tully Hall. April 6 at 8.)

Da Camera of Houston—The Texans offer another of their signature programs designed to highlight links between music and literature. In this concert, readings from Thomas Mann are interlaced with performances of Beethoven's C-Minor Piano Sonata (Op. 111) and Schoenberg's String Trio, among other works. (Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center. April 7 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 875-5050.)

Mitsuko Uchida—With Murray Perahia's performance preceding this one by only three days, pianophiles should rejoice: the two recitals offer a high-calibre survey of two centuries of keyboard masterpieces, with two of today's most distinguished pianists trotting out some of their specialties. Ms Uchida's program comprises Berg's Sonata, Schumann's "Davidsbündlertänze," and Beethoven's final sonata (in C Minor, Op. 111). (Carnegie Hall. April 8 at 7:30.)

ALSO OF INTEREST

david higgs: Organist. (St. Bartholomew's Church, Park Ave. at 50th St. 378-0248. April 2 at 8.) . . . **juilliard orchestra:** Zdenek Macal conducting. (Avery Fisher Hall. April 2 at 8.) . . . **new york pops.** (Carnegie Hall. April 4 at 8.) . . . **frederic chiu:** Pianist. (Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center. April 6 at 11 A.M. For information about tickets, call 875-5050.) . . . **till fellner:** Pianist. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. April 6 at 2. For information about tickets, call 586-4680.) . . . **all-brahms:** Chamber music marking the composer's centennial week. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. April 6 at 2.) . . . **bayer male choir:** The employee chorus of the German Bayer corporation (of aspirin fame). (Avery Fisher Hall. April 6 at 7:30.) . . . **yelena baksht:** Pianist. (Mansfield Hotel, 12 W. 44th St. April 7 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Fielding Questions—As the baseball season opens, a three-day conference at Long Island University's Brooklyn campus considers Jackie Robinson and his legacy. April 3 at 10 A.M.: Author Roger Kahn ("The Boys of Summer") offers opening remarks. . . . ¶ April 4 at 1:15: A lunchtime panel, with Sam Lacy, of the Baltimore *Afro-American*, and other sports reporters of the era. . . . At 2:15: A round-table discussion with some of Robinson's former teammates, including Ralph Branca, Johnny Podres, and Tommy Holmes. . . . At 4:15: Filmmaker Spike Lee, former St. Louis Cardinals shortstop Ozzie Smith, and other pundits look at the state of the sport today. . . . ¶ April 5 at 1: Larry King closes the conference with reminiscences about growing up in Brooklyn. For a complete schedule, call 718-488-1010.

Readings—April 5 at 8: Grace Paley, David Henderson, and others read their poetry at a benefit for the War Resisters League; spoken-word maestro Bob Holman serves as m.c. (Washington Square Church, 135 W. 4th St. Tickets at the door.) . . . ¶ April 7 at 8: Charles Simic and Gary Soto read their poetry. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.) . . . ¶ April 8 at 7: David Leavitt pages through his latest, "Arkansas," a collection of three novellas. (A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ April 8 at 8: Fiction writers Susan Dworkin and Melanie Rae Thon read from their most recent works. (National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park S. No tickets necessary.)

Talks—April 3 at 8: *Village Voice* dance critic Deborah Jowitt talks with Edward Villella about dancing for George Balanchine. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.) . . . ¶ April 6 at 4: Independent curator Robin P. Schatell delves into the East Village by soliciting stories from Tom Birchard, owner of the restaurant Veselka, Jonas Mekas, founder of Anthology Film Archives, and other long-term residents of the neighborhood. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. Tickets at the door.) . . . ¶ April 7 at 8: Jesse Jackson sides with *The Nation's* Christopher Hitchens against Michigan Court of Appeals Judge Stephen Markman and *National Review's* Hadley Arkes in a debate on the death penalty. Former Mayor Edward Koch tries to keep the peace. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 242-8400, ext. 228.)

Walk—April 6 at 2: Veteran birder Sarah Elliott teaches the basics of birdwatching ("It's rather like hitting a baseball—your body just reacts") on a B.Y.O.-binoculars tour of Central Park. For more information, call 873-3400.

AMNIO TO GENOME

Research on genetic diseases – notably many diseases of childhood – is entering an exciting, promising new phase. As scientists intensify the process of deciphering the secrets of the human genetic blueprint, their findings yield critical new clues to the development of genetic diseases and to the search for new therapies. ❧ The figures are staggering: deciphering the blueprint means the ultimate sequencing of 3,000,000,000 letters of the human genetic code. Genetic diseases number about 5,000. ❧ The Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot, Israel, takes pride in its commitment to both these research challenges. Years ago, discoveries in a Weizmann laboratory led to the first uses of amniocentesis to examine the fetus and diagnose hereditary illnesses. Among current projects on the Weizmann agenda are studies of fundamental embryonic development, Down syndrome, low birth weight, cerebral palsy, cystic fibrosis, insulin substitutes and vaccinations against juvenile diabetes. The establishment of the Bioinformatics Genome Research Center on the Weizmann campus underscores the growing contributions of Institute scientists to the World Human Genome Project. ❧ It's another example of how support for basic scientific research yields practical benefits previously beyond reach.

The Weizmann Institute, founded in 1934, is a community of 2,400 scientists, engineers and scientists-in-training engaged in a full agenda of 850 research projects ranging from basic medical research in cancer, AIDS, neurosciences and children's diseases to chemistry, physics, agriculture, computer science and the environment.

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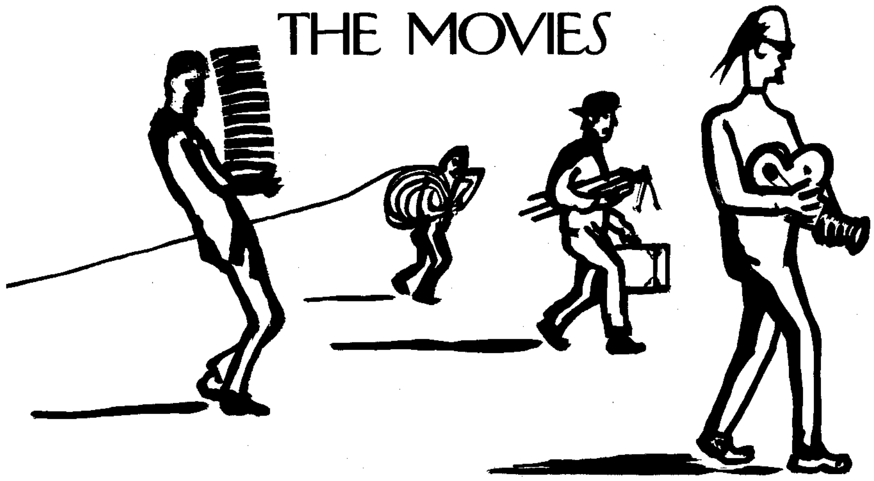
THE MOVIES



FILMS OPENING THIS WEEK

Anna Karenina—The Tolstoy novel, adapted and directed by Bernard Rose, with Sophie Marceau, Sean Bean, Alfred Molina, Mia Kirshner, and James Fox. Opening April 4. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square.)

Chasing Amy—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening April 4. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square.)

Childhood's End—Jeff Lipsky's début feature explores the ties between three recent high-school graduates and their families. Opening April 4. (Quad Cinema.)

Double Team—Jean-Claude Van Damme and Dennis Rodman are counterterrorist experts in the Hong Kong director Tsui Hark's first English-language action film. Opening April 4. (Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, 19th Street East 6, 64th and 2nd, and Village East Cinemas.)

Inventing the Abbotts—A drama about the relationship between two sets of Illinois teenagers in the late fifties: the working-class Holt brothers (Joaquin Phoenix and Billy Crudup) and the affluent Abbott sisters (Liv Tyler, Jennifer Connelly, and Joanna Going). Directed by Pat O'Connor. Opening April 4. (Chelsea Cinemas, Gotham Cinema, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, State, and Village East Cinemas.)

Licensed to Kill—Arthur Dong's documentary explores the backgrounds and motivations of prisoners convicted of killing gay men. Opening April 2. (Film Forum.)

A Mongolian Tale—A story of young love and separation, based on Zhang Cheng-Zhi's 1982 novel, "Black Steed." Directed by Xie Fei. In Mongolian. Opening April 2. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

The Saint—Val Kilmer, like George Sanders and Roger Moore before him, plays the suave Simon Templar, in a story of theft and political intrigue. Also starring Elisabeth Shue. Directed by Phillip Noyce. Opening April 4.

That Old Feeling—A romantic comedy about a long-divorced couple (Bette Midler and Dennis Farina) brought together by their daughter's wedding. Directed by Carl Reiner. Screenplay by Leslie Dixon. Opening April 4. (Chelsea Cinemas, Coronet Cinemas, Lincoln Square, National Twin, 34th St. East, and Waverly.)

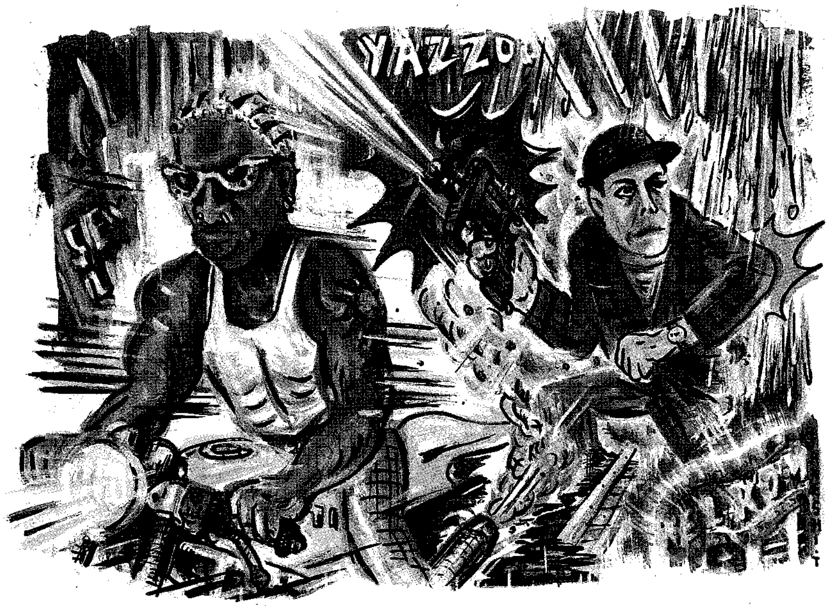
CURRENT FILMS

(The signed notes are by Bruce Diones, Sarah Kerr, Anthony Lane, and Terrence Rafferty. If a movie has been reviewed in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given. Theatre information is listed on page 25.)

B.A.P.S.—Two Georgia women (Halle Berry and Natalie Desselle) save a Beverly Hills millionaire (Martin Landau) from his scheming heirs, in a comedy directed by Robert Townsend. (Lincoln Square, Manhattan Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, State, and Village East Cinemas.)

Boys Life 2—Two years ago, the first "Boys Life" proved there was an audience for short, gay-themed films, and this latest bundle is more consistent than the last. The best of the four is "Alkalai, Iowa," written and directed with great confidence and care by Mark Christopher. A jewel of a story about a young gay farmer's investigation into his father's past, it makes its points so quietly and indirectly that it comes close to poetry.—B.D. (Quad Cinema.)

City of Industry—John Irvin's bracing crime melodrama adheres to one of the simplest (and most satisfying) hardboiled formulas, but the movie is remarkably free of self-consciousness, and its clean, unpretentious craftsmanship may come as a shock to audiences that have grown accustomed to the postmodern pulp of Quentin Tarantino and his many imitators. The screenplay, by Ken Solarz, gives us first the pleasure of a meticulously planned and coolly executed jewelry-store heist, and then the jolt of a double cross. (As always, there's one gang member who doesn't see the value of sharing.) The role of avenging the betrayal falls to the quietest and wariest of the thieves—an old pro named Roy Egan (Harvey Keitel), who has the lone-wolf temperament that the task requires. Keitel brilliantly embodies the low-down expertise that the movie as a whole celebrates. Like Irvin and Solarz, he's a diehard, and together they remind us of something the postmodernists have forgotten: that the allure of this kind of thriller is, ultimately, the romance of competence. Also with Stephen Dorff, Timothy Hutton, Famke Janssen, and Wade Dominguez.—T.R. (3/24/97) (Embassy 4 and Village East Cinemas.)



Dennis Rodman and Jean-Claude Van Damme in "Double Team."

Crash—David Cronenberg's elegant adaptation of J. G. Ballard's infamous novel has been making waves of unease, and occasional nausea, ever since it screened at Cannes last year. As so often, the fuss feels out of proportion to the work, a small, cold, sense-numbing tale that takes itself, and its message to the mechanized world, very seriously indeed. Whereas the best Cronenberg movies are warmed by an animated central presence (Jeff Goldblum in "The Fly," for example), the director has crammed this one with spaced-out performers and encouraged them to act lobotomized. James Spader and Holly Hunter meet head-on in a car crash and take their relationship from there, setting in motion a sexual round-robin that includes Rosanna Arquette, Deborah Kara Unger, and Elias Koteas. In this echoing, sparsely peopled environment, no one slides into depravity—the characters are up to their necks in it from the start. They may be turned on by violent chaos, but it never really looks chaotic; Cronenberg, suave to a fault, arranges each crash like a still-life. Those who attend the film in the hope of arousal will probably go home with freeze-dried libidos.—A.L. (3/31/97) (Angelika Film Center, Criterion Center, Regency, and Sutton.)

The Daytrippers—This low-budget début feature by the writer and director Greg Mottola is no big deal, but it's worth searching out. The heroine, a Long Island schoolteacher (Hope Davis), suspects her husband (Stanley Tucci) of infidelity, and confesses her fears to her parents (Anne Meara and Pat McNamara), her sister (Parker Posey), and her sister's boyfriend (Liev Schreiber). The whole group then piles into the car and heads for Manhattan, following a few tenuous leads and hoping to pick up the elusive husband's scent. The odd dynamics of this suburban-family posse generate most of the picture's humor. It's a terrific ensemble, and Mottola's affection for the characters is obvious: he squeezes as much comic juice out of them as he can without crushing them. Also with Campbell Scott.—T.R. (3/24/97) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

The Devil's Own—Harrison Ford and Brad Pitt star in Alan J. Pakula's tale of friendship, hidden identity, and the Irish Troubles. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, 64th & 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.)

Donnie Brasco—The title character, played by Johnny Depp, is an undercover F.B.I. agent who infiltrates the Mafia by pretending to be a crooked jeweller—and also by pretending, even more successfully, to be incredibly dull. For some reason he is accepted into the Mob and befriended by Lefty (Al Pacino), a hoodlum on the wane. Pacino, as you would ex-

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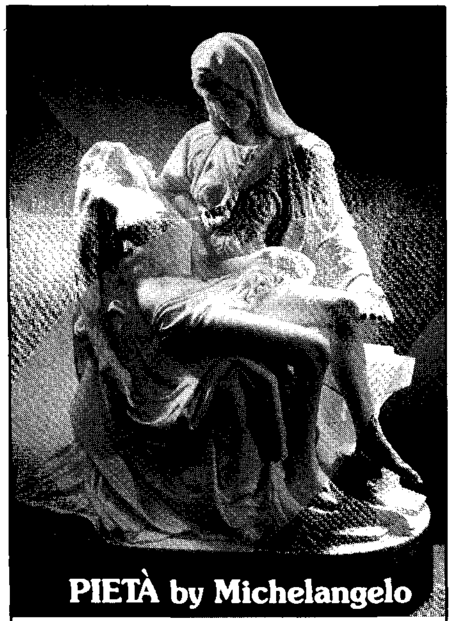

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pect, gives a fine demonstration of sagging soulfulness, but it's hard to believe that people are still making movies that require us to feel sorry for mobsters. Paul Attanasio's script works hard to make fun of them, but Mike Newell's direction deadens any comedy in his quest for a violent mood piece.—A.L. (3/17/97) (Criterion Center, East 85th Street, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, 64th and 2nd, and Village East Cinemas.)

THE EIGHTH DAY—Harry (Daniel Auteuil) is a hollow shell of a man; the person destined to fill him with joy and understanding is Georges (Pascal Duquenne), a victim of Down's syndrome. There is grace in the way the director, Jaco Van Dormael, seems to happen upon startling images, but the emotional principle of the picture is obvious and embarrassing: Georges exists to cure Harry. Duquenne, who has Down's syndrome himself, is a reviving presence: his cadenzas of sweetness and intransigence just about rescue the movie from monotony. In French.—A.L. (3/17/97) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

THE ENGLISH PATIENT—Written and directed by Anthony Minghella, from the novel by Michael Ondaatje, this long and searching movie tangles together a number of stories and characters: Almásy (Ralph Fiennes) and Katharine (Kristin Scott Thomas), who have an affair in North Africa before the Second World War; a French-Canadian nurse (Juliette Binoche) who cares for the badly burned Almásy after the war, and the Sikh soldier (Naveen Andrews) *she* has an affair with; and the mysterious Caravaggio (Willem Dafoe), a scavenging thief who appears to know the secrets of Almásy's past. The triumph of the film lies not just in the force and range of the performances but in Minghella's creation of an intimate epic: vast landscapes mingle with the minute details of desire, and the combination is transfixing.—A.L. (11/25/96) (Chelsea Cinemas, Embassy 3, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, New York Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas. . . . ¶ 34th St. East; through April 3.)

JERRY MAGUIRE—Tom Cruise plays the title character, who is a glib, cocky agent for professional athletes. In the fluid opening scenes, the movie, which was written and directed by Cameron Crowe, promises to be something unusual—a comedy about the spiritual crisis of a shallow man. But the star quickly reverts to his familiar feisty, can-do shtick, and Crowe loses control of the fragile comic tone. Also with Renée Zellweger, Cuba Gooding, Jr., and Bonnie Hunt.—T.R. (12/16/96) (Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, and 64th and 2nd.)

KAMA SUTRA—In Mira Nair's fairy tale, set in sixteenth-century India, Indira Varma plays a poor sexpot who seduces the king, gets cast out of her home, becomes a courtesan, and finally falls in love with the court sculptor (Ramon Tikaram). The movie succeeds so beautifully as a feast for the senses that Nair, apparently, sees no need to make the characters or the dialogue interesting.—S.K. (Cinema I, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

KOLYA—A likable enough Czech reworking of a tried-and-true formula: a sort of "Kramer vs. Kramer" set in Prague, in 1988-89, at the dawn of the Velvet Revolution. The screenwriter, Zdenek Sverak, also plays the central character, a bachelor cellist who suddenly finds himself responsible for an adorable Russian five-year-old. The cellist slowly grows out of his selfishness, and his love for this child who doesn't speak his language points to the new, boundaryless world that's about to open up. Directed by Jan Sverak. In Czech.—S.K. (First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.)

LIAR LIAR—Not a great comedy, but a great idea for a comedy. Tom Shadyac's movie, written by Paul Guay and Stephen Mazur, stars Jim Carrey as a no-good, lowdown, lying lawyer named Fletcher, whose life is upended when his five-year-old son makes a birthday wish that, for exactly one day, his father will be incapable of telling a lie. The notion of truth as not just impractical but downright anarchic is highly attractive, and as Fletcher peels away the layers of venal charm, you wait to discover an even more pungent venality beneath. Instead—guess what—he turns out to be a nice guy. The movie is one part explosive to two parts repentant: far too sickly a recipe, although Jim Carrey works manfully to liven it up. His face and body go to war with themselves as he struggles against sincerity, and you feel let down when he finally surrenders to the forces of mush. Shadyac is on a roll: his last film was the equally genial remake of "The Nutty Professor," and it's touching to find a director who believes in all sincerity that jokes about gas and pimples are, and always will be, inherently funny. With Maura Tierney as Fletcher's ex and Jennifer Tilly as an unstoppable sex machine.—A.L. (3/31/97) (Chelsea West, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, National Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 34th Street Showplace, and Waverly.)

LOVE AND OTHER CATASTROPHES—Australian director Emma-Kate Croghan chronicles a day in the life of two film students (Frances O'Conner and Alice Garner) preparing to throw a party in their new apartment. (Angelika Film Center, Eastside Playhouse, and 62nd & Broadway.)

LOVE JONES—Writer-director Theodore Witcher's romantic comedy about a group of young middle-class blacks is set in Chicago's smoky poetry scene, with jazz placed tastefully throughout. The film tries a little too hard to be engagingly witty and upscale, but it has some of the most attractive—and sexiest—actors in a long time. The chemistry of the leads, Larenz Tate and Nia Long, is enough to make the movie likable, and they're surrounded by equally sassy friends and neighbors.—B.D. (Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, Manhattan Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

MARVIN'S ROOM—Jerry Zaks's strength-through-illness drama, adapted by the late Scott McPherson from his 1990 play. Bessie (Diane Keaton), who spends her time caring for her bedridden father (Hume Cronyn), discovers that she herself has leukemia; the search for a bone-marrow donor leads her to her sister, Lee (Meryl Streep), whom she hasn't seen in twenty years. Both women give it all they've got, but this cloying film doesn't deserve their generosity. Leonardo DiCaprio is highly convincing as Lee's dysfunctional son.—A.L. (1/20/97) (Cinema 3 and Guild.)

PRISONER OF THE MOUNTAINS—A picture set against the background of the war in Chechnya, about two Russian soldiers captured and held in the hope of an exchange of prisoners. The director, Sergei Bodrov, unfolds his hushed brotherhood-of-man tale (which was inspired by a Tolstoy story) in a showy but poetic way, filling it with moody, haunted, compellingly fresh and beautiful images. In Russian.—B.D. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

PRIVATE PARTS—Howard Stern's bid for the love of millions has plenty of isolated hilarious bits, and Stern, who plays himself, is surprisingly photogenic. But the film asks us to see him as both unusually lovable and bravely moral, and that's just too much. The disingenuous screenplay, by Len Blum and Michael Kolesniko, emphasizes Stern's vulnerability and leaves out a lot of his radio show's true meanness. Mary McCormack plays his cute, clean-cut wife. Directed by Betty Thomas.—S.K. (Chelsea Cinemas, Coronet Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Olympia, Orpheum VII, State, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE QUIET ROOM—Writer-director Rolf de Herr's look into the mind of a seven-year-old girl who hasn't spoken since she was three. (68th St. Playhouse.)

SECRETS & LIES—Hortense (Marianne Jean-Baptiste), the heroine of Mike Leigh's broadest and most ambitious film to date, decides after the death of her adoptive mother to seek her biological one. The quest turns up Cynthia (Brenda Blethyn), who freaks out: Hortense is middle-class and black, Cynthia working-class and white. Jean-Baptiste gives a quiet, pacific performance; Blethyn deals in spasms of exaggeration which belong in another film altogether. Still, there is a fine supporting cast, and they all gather in the final scene, a cathartic barbecue that starts off as nicely choreographed light comedy and darkens to a Bergman-like chorus of wailing women and slightly overcooked dialogue.—A.L. (First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Quad Cinema.)

Selena—A film written and directed by Gregory Nava, about the life and death of Selena Quintanilla Perez. Becky Lee Meza and Jennifer Lopez star as the singer at different ages. (84th Street Sixplex, 19th Street East 6, Olympia, Orpheum VII, State, 72nd Street East, and Village East Cinemas.)

Shine—The hero of Scott Hicks's absorbing biographical film is the Australian concert pianist David Helfgott (played, at different stages of his life, by Alex Rafalowicz, Noah Taylor, and Geoffrey Rush), who suffered a severe breakdown, spent years in mental institutions, and then, improbably, resumed his career. Although the movie's swiftness and lightness are pleasing, the over-all image they create is indistinct: it just evaporates in your head when the lights come up. Also with Armin Mueller-Stahl, Lynn Redgrave, and John Gielgud.—T.R. (12/2/96) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema II, Lincoln Square, and Murray Hill Cinemas.)

The Sixth Man—The extra player on a college basketball team is a ghost (Kadeem Hardison), who helps lead his brother (Marlon Wayans) and the other athletes to the N.C.A.A. Championships. Directed by Randall Miller. (Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 86th Street East Twin, Embassy 1, Sutton, and Village Theatre VII.)

Sling Blade—Billy Bob Thornton wrote and directed this dunderheaded film, in which he plays a simpleton who, released from an asylum for the criminally insane after serving twenty-five years for the murder of his mother and her lover, returns to his poor Southern home town and ends up befriending a small boy and defending him against *his* mom's abusive boyfriend. Although the film does have two terrific actors—Dwight Yoakam, as the menacing boyfriend, and John Ritter, as a gay store manager—its critical success is mystifying; it's hard to believe that anybody could fall for its dim homilies.—B.D. (Angelika Film Center, Carnegie Hall Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, 86th Street East Twin, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Murray Hill Cinemas.)

Smilla's Sense of Snow—For a while, this adaptation of Peter Hoeg's 1993 best-seller plays as a ghost story. The director, Bille August, and his superb cinematographer, Jörgen Persson, lay on a wonderfully eerie, winter-light mood: chilly, hushed, uneasy. But when the screenplay, by Ann Biderman, takes Smilla, the detective heroine (Julia Ormond), from Copenhagen to Greenland, the fine suggestiveness of the movie's beginning collapses, like thin ice, under the weight of dumb shoot-outs, evil scientists, and breathless escapes.—T.R. (3/10/97) (Angelika Film Center, Beekman, Lincoln Square, and 19th Street East 6.)

Turbo: A Power Rangers Movie—The further adventures of the teen-age action heroes who dress in blue, yellow, red, pink, and green. Directed by David Winning and Shuki Levy. (Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, and First & 62nd Cinemas.)

When We Were Kings—A foolproof documentary. Then again, it's hard to see how anyone could mess up the story of the 1974 fight between Muhammad Ali and George Foreman: the drama is all there, ripe for the telling, and the director, Leon Gast, grabs the opportunity with both hands. To maintain the suspense, he enlists help from a wide range of Ali fans: George Plimpton, Spike Lee, and, above all, Norman Mailer, who talks about that night with the unabated excitement of a child.—A.L. (2/17/97) (19th Street East 6 and Lincoln Square.)

ALSO PLAYING

BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD DO AMERICA: Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **BIG NIGHT** (reviewed in our issue of 9/23/96): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **BOOTY CALL:** Criterion Center. . . . **BREAKING THE WAVES** (11/18/96): Cinema 3rd Avenue and Quad Cinema. . . . **CATS DON'T DANCE:** Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **DAYLIGHT:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **DRUNKS:** Quad Cinema. . . . **THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK:** Chelsea Cinemas and Village East Cinemas. . . . **EVERYONE SAYS I LOVE YOU:** New York Twin and The Screening Room. . . . **FARGO** (3/25/96): The Screening Room and Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE GODFATHER:** Astor Plaza. . . . **HAMLET** (1/13/97): Paris. . . . **THE HOTEL MANOR INN:** Quad Cinema. . . . **JUNGLE 2 JUNGLE:** 86th Street East Twin, Embassy 2, Metro Cinema, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **LOST HIGHWAY** (3/10/97): Village Theatre VII. . . . **MICHAEL:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY** (1/6/97): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE RELIC:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **RETURN OF THE JEDI:** Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and Ziegfeld. . . . **RIDICULE:** 59th Street East Cinema. . . . **THE SUBSTANCE OF FIRE:** Carnegie Hall Cinemas. . . . **WAITING FOR GUFFMAN:** Village East Cinemas.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

Angelika 57, 225 W. 57th St.
Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Carnegie Hall Cinemas, Seventh Ave. between 56th and 57th Sts.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St.
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
86th Street East Twin, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Embassy 1, Broadway at 46th St.
Embassy 2, 3, and 4, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Manhattan Twin, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
National Twin, Broadway at 44th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St.
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
Regency, Broadway at 67th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
68th St. Playhouse, Third Ave. at 68th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th St. East, 241 E. 34th St.
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

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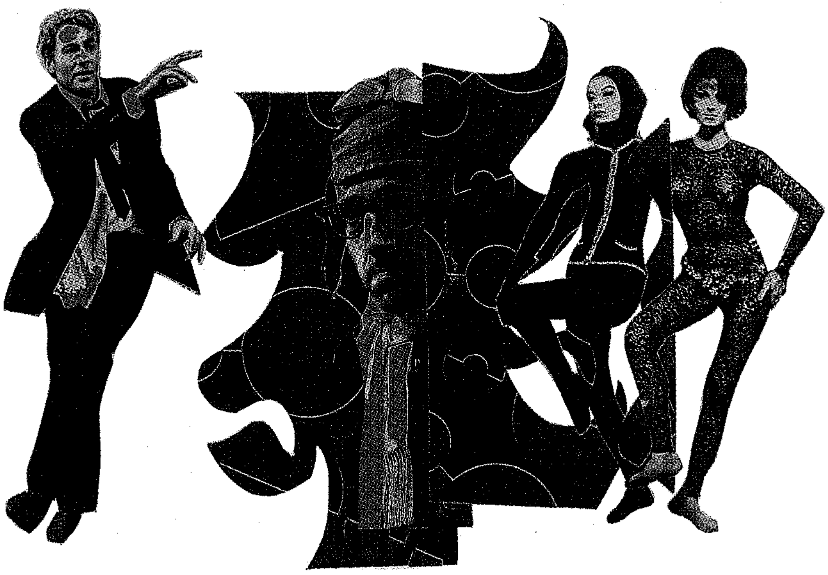
REVIVALS

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael and Michael Sragow. Theatre addresses and phone numbers appear with the listings following these notes.)

Das Boot (1980)—If you want to experience the tedium of life in a German submarine, this is the movie that will give it to you—you're trapped (for three and a half hours, in this newly released director's cut) in a Second World War U-boat that's ten feet wide by a hundred and fifty feet long. And with men who have the same kind of anti-war nobility that the men had in American submarine epics of the fifties. Jürgen Prochnow is the heroic man-of-few-words-but-strong-deep-feelings captain. The director, Wolfgang Peterson, did the adaptation of the best-selling autobiographical novel by Lothar-Günther Buchheim, a former war correspondent. In German.—P.K. (Paris; starting April 4.)



At A Different Light Bookstore, Peter O'Toole, Woody Allen, Capucine, and Paula Prentiss in “What's New Pussycat?”

O. KARPINSKY

The Divorcée (1930)—Norma Shearer and the double standard. Her husband (Chester Morris) is unfaithful, but she isn't allowed to be; they split. This being intended as a sizzling, daring movie, she turns to Robert Montgomery and Conrad Nagel before reconciling (on New Year's Eve, of course) with her ex-husband. Shearer's specialty was sexy suffering in satin gowns by Adrian; here, she always seems to want to abandon herself to naughtiness, but one damned thing after another stops her. Robert Z. Leonard directed.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; April 7-8.)

Our Blushing Brides (1930)—The title is deceptive: it's a popular film of the period, about whether working girls ought to Take the Easiest Way or Wait for Mr. Right. Joan Crawford, Anita Page, and Dorothy Sebastian are the roommates who work in the same department store (the vivacious Crawford as a model, the other two as clerks). Their dreams of luxury get them in trouble with, respectively, Robert Montgomery, Raymond Hackett, and John Miljan. It's high-mindedly moral but not seriously so. Harry Beaumont directed.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; April 6.)

What's New Pussycat? (1965)—The script for this lavish production, set in Paris, is by Woody Allen, and his oblique humor is occasionally weird and alienating in this expensive context. It's a frenetic but generally funny psychiatric farce. Peter O'Toole plays a fashion-magazine editor who consults a psychiatrist (Peter Sellers) about how to cure his susceptibility to the girls who pursue him; inevitably, Sellers goes berserk trying to discover the secrets of O'Toole's success. Sellers is in the Woody Allen role, but Woody turns up, too, and there is a trio of beautiful, zingy comediennes—Paula Prentiss, Romy Schneider, and Capucine. Directed by Clive Donner.—P.K. (A Different Light Bookstore; April 6.)

Wuthering Heights (1953)—Luis Buñuel and Emily Brontë prove to be a classic mismatch: almost everything about the writer-director's adaptation goes wrong, though sometimes in a fascinatingly awful way. The combination of his iconoclastic shock tactics (he starts the film with a vulture shoot), an abysmal cast (originally hired by the producer, Oscar Dancigers, for another film—a musical), and the transposition of the novel's pent-up Yorkshire passions to hot Mexican climes makes this film turgid and just about unwatchable to everyone except aficionados of bad movies by great directors. It does have a fabulous final ten minutes, when the ghost of Cathy/Cataline (Irasema Dillian) haunts Heathcliff/Alexandro (Jorge Mistral) to the swelling strains of Wagner's “Liebestod”; unfortunately, this “Wuthering Heights” comes to life only after the heroine dies. In Spanish.—M.S. (Anthology Film Archives; April 4-6.)

Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow (1963)—Exuberance carries the day (well, two out of three days) in this Vittorio De Sica anthology film spotlighting the game comic spirit and outsized beauty of Sophia Loren and the humane slapstick satire of her co-star, Marcello Mastroianni. In “Adelina of Naples,” Loren plays a peddler of black-market cigarettes who, exploiting a loophole in Italian law, stays pregnant to stay out of jail—a situation that exhausts even Mastroianni, the most ardent of husbands. In “Anna of Milan,” she's a spoiled society woman, and he's a smitten writer who discovers he means less to her than her Rolls-Royce. And in “Mara in Rome,” she swivels and shines as a prostitute with a heart of gold—maybe even platinum—who keeps her most fervent client (Mastroianni) waiting while she honors a weeklong vow of chastity. The middle entry is a failed parody of alienation chic, but the visions of Mastroianni fainting from erotic fatigue in the first one and of Loren performing a brutally truncated striptease in the third are among the glories of Italian comedy. The writers are Eduardo de Filippo and Isabella Quarantotti (No. 1), Cesare Zavattini and Billa Billa Zanuso (No. 2), and Zavattini (No. 3). In Italian.—M.S. (Museum of Modern Art; April 7-8.)

LATE RUNS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

New Directors/New Films—A festival of international films. April 2 at 6: “Ah-Chong” (Chang Tso-chi; Taiwan). . . . April 2 at 9: “Al Leja” (Ryad Chaia; Syria). . . . April 3 at 6 and April 5 at 10: “Sick: The Life and Death of Bob Flanagan, Supermasochist” (Kirby Dick; United States). . . . April 3 at 9 and April 6 at 12:30: “Sous Sol” (Pierre Gang; Canada). . . . April 4 at 6 and April 6 at 3:30: “Sunday” (Jonathan Nossiter; United States). . . . April 4 at 9 and April 5 at 1: “Moebius” (Gustavo Mosquera; Argentina). . . . April 5 at 4 and April 6 at 6: “English, August” (Dev Benegal; India). . . . April 5 at 7 and April 6 at 9: “Shall We Dance?” (Masayuki Suo; Japan). (Museum of Modern Art; Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. For information, call 708-9500.)

Film Forum 2 and 3, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—**THEATRE 2:** April 2: “Counsellor-at-Law” (1933, William Wyler) and “Once in a Lifetime” (1932, Russell Mack). . . . April 3: “Born to Dance” (1936, Roy Del Ruth) and “Broadway Melody of 1936” (1935, Del Ruth). . . . April 4-5: “Possessed” (1931, Clarence Brown) and “Penthouse” (1933, W. S. Van Dyke). . . . April 6: “Our Dancing Daughters” (1928, Harry Beaumont) and “Our Blushing Brides” (†). . . . April 7-8: “Dynamite” (1929, Cecil B. De Mille) and “The Divorcée” (†). . . . **THEATRE 3:** “Le Samouraï” (1967, Jean-Pierre Melville; in French).

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—April 7 at 2:30 and April 8 at 6: “Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow” (†). . . . April 7 at 6 and April 8 at 2:30: “Dark Eyes” (1987, Nikita Mikhalkov; in Italian and Russian).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—April 2 at 2, 4, 6, and 8; April 3 at 2, 4, and 9; and April 4 at 2 and 4: “Suzanne Farrell: Elusive Muse” (1996, Anne Belle and Deborah Dickson). . . . ¶ April 3 at 6:30: “Paul Monette: The Brink of Summer's End” (1996, Monte Bramer). . . . ¶ A program of films directed by Philippe Garrell; all in French, with English subtitles. April 4 at 6:30 and April 8 at 4: “Liberté, la Nuit” (1983). . . . April 4 at 8:45, April 5 at 8, and April 8 at 2: “The Phantom Heart” (1996). . . . April 5 at 4 and April 6 at 6:15: “The Inner Scar” (1971). . . . April 5 at 5:45 and April 6 at 8: “I Don't Hear the Guitar Anymore” (1990). . . . April 6 at 4: “Marie Pour Mémoire” (1967). . . . ¶ April 5-6 at 2: “Jungle Jack” (1993, Stefan Fjeldmark and Flemming Quist Moller).

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—April 8 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: “Purple Noon” (1959, René Clément; in French).

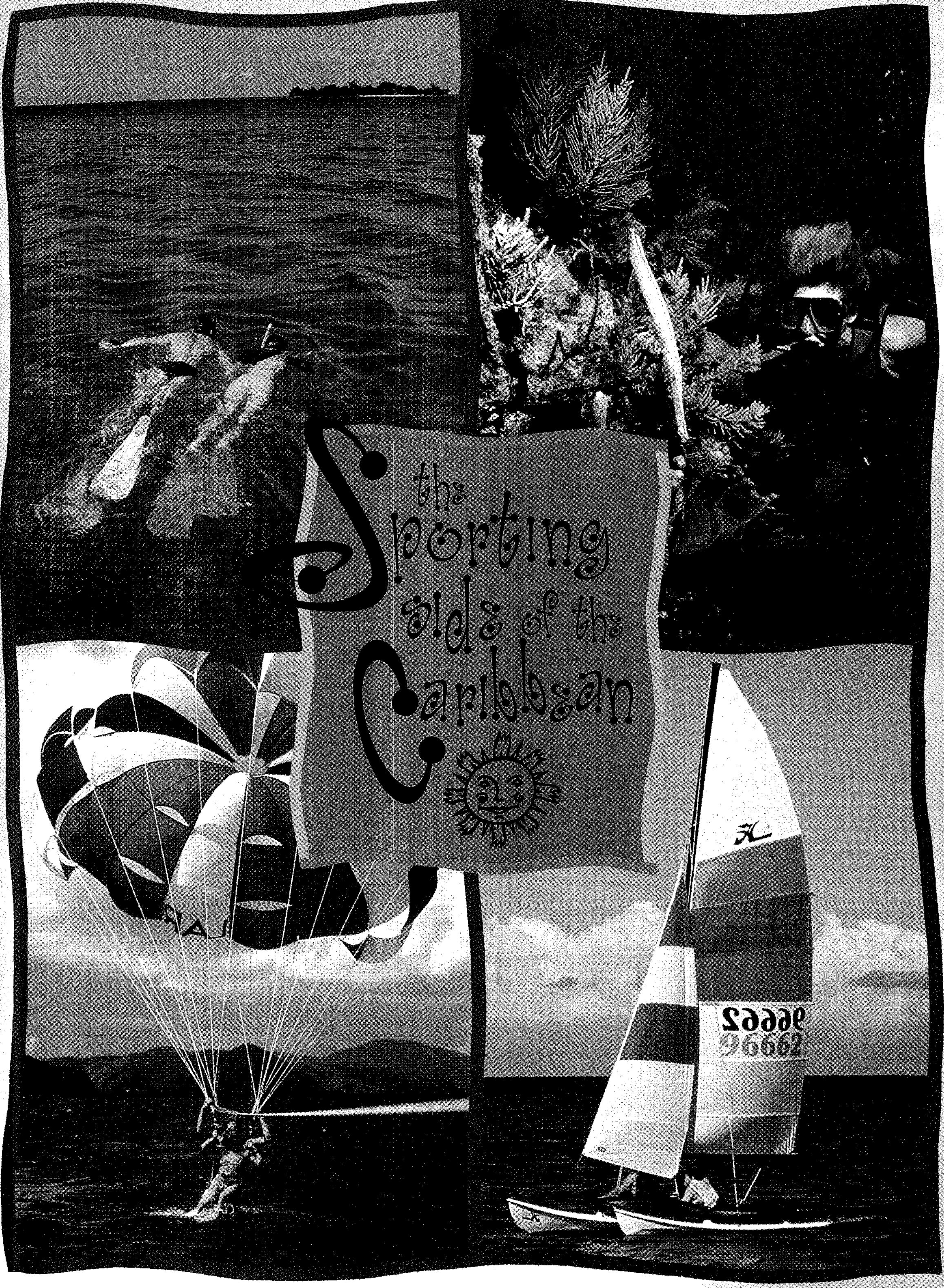
American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—A program of films starring Humphrey Bogart. April 5 at 2 and April 6 at 6: “Casablanca” (1943, Michael Curtiz). . . . April 5 at 5: “To Have and Have Not” (1945, Howard Hawks). . . . April 6 at 2: “High Sierra” (1941, Raoul Walsh). . . . April 6 at 4: “The Maltese Falcon” (1941, John Huston).

Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (864-5400)—A series of musical films, each preceded by a short cabaret performance featuring the music of the film's composer. April 8 at 7:30: Claiborne Cary will sing songs by Jerome Kern, followed by “Swing Time” (1936, George Stevens).

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St.—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On April 6 at 7, the feature will be “What's New Pussycat?” (†).

Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—April 2-3 at 6, April 4 at 9, April 5 at 10, April 6 at 8, April 7 at 9, and April 8 at 6: “Landscape in the Mist” (1988, Theo Angelopoulos). . . . ¶ Films by Luis Buñuel. April 2-3 at 8: “Death in the Garden” (1956). . . . April 2-3 at 10: “Sunrise” (1955). . . . April 4 at 8 and April 5-6 at 3:30, 6:45, and 10: “Wuthering Heights” (†). . . . April 4 at 10 and April 5-6 at 5 and 8:15: “Nazarin” (1958). . . . April 7-8 at 6:30 and 9:30: “The Milky Way” (1970) and “Simon of the Desert” (1965). . . . ¶ April 2-3 at 9, April 4-7 at 6, and April 8 at 9: “The White Balloon” (1995, Jafar Panahi).

Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St.—April 2-6 at 5:30 and 8: Short films by students of New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. (For information, call 998-1795.)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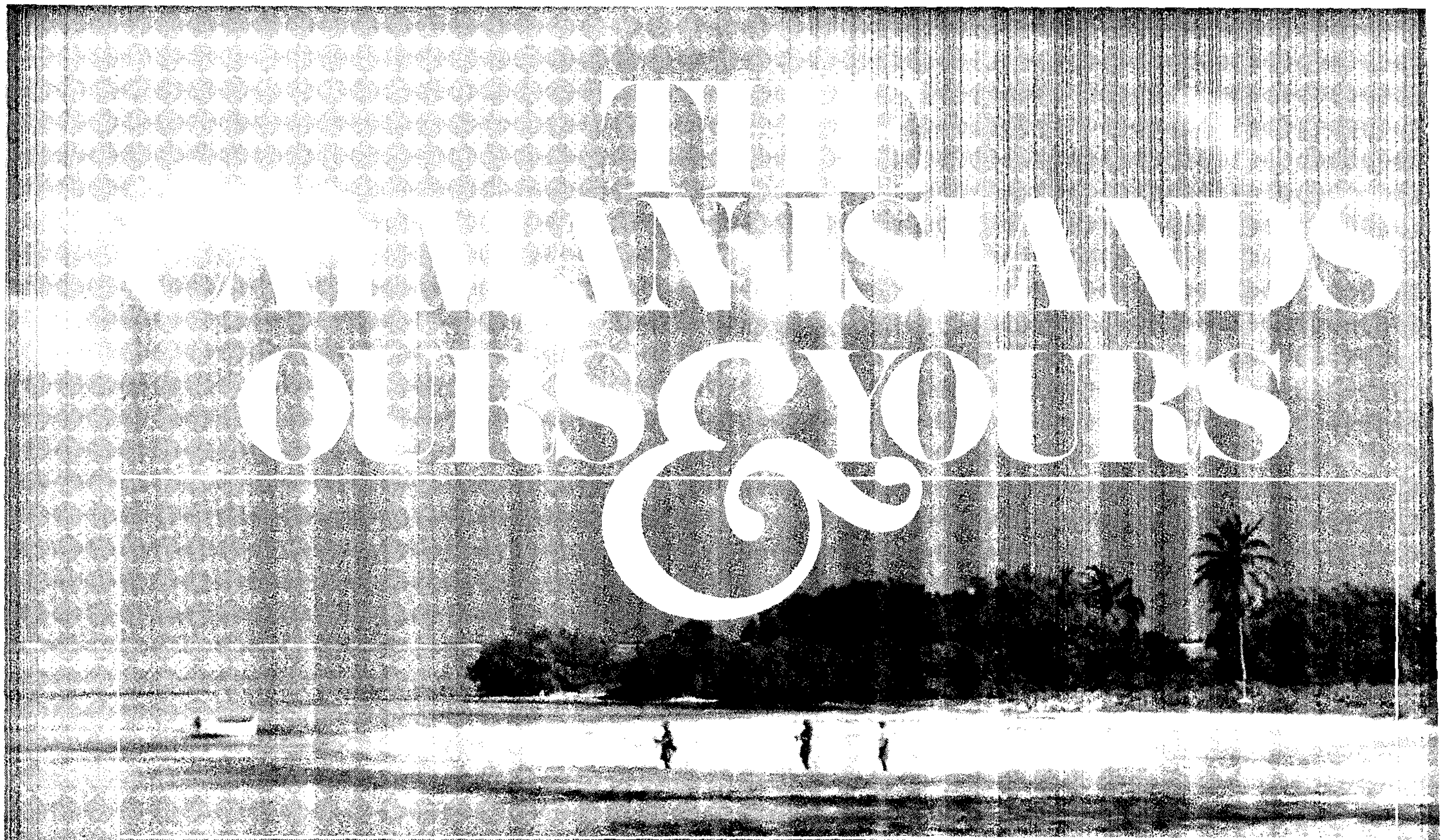
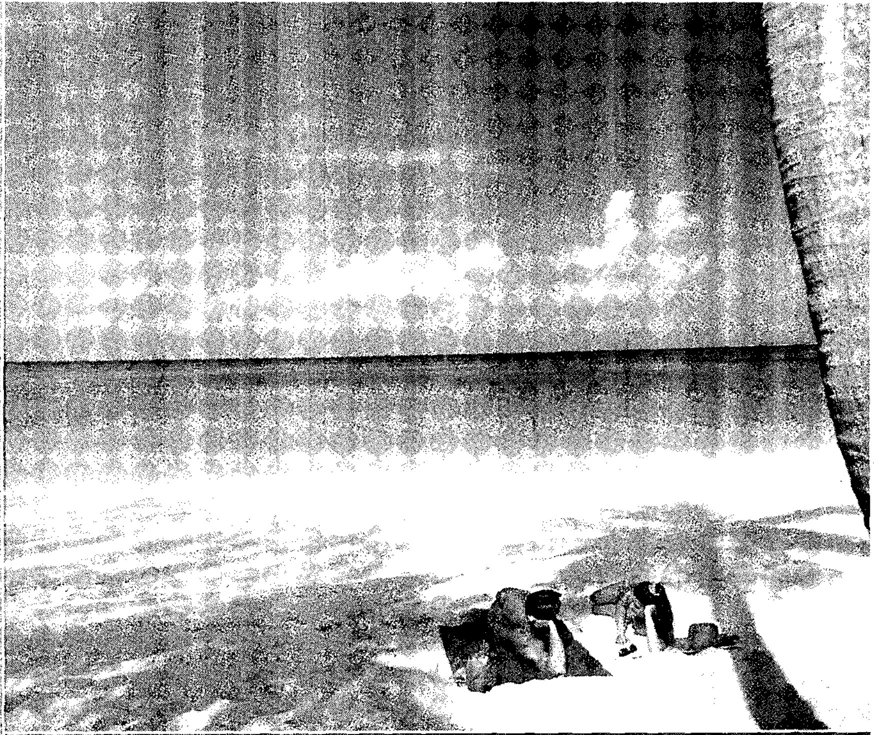
the Sporting Side of the Caribbean





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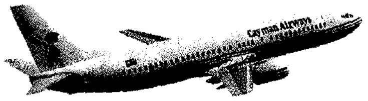

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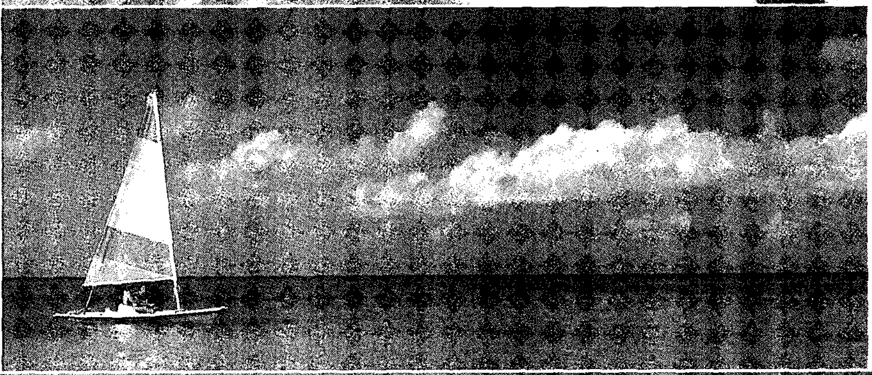


"Those who know us, love us."

by David Butwin

There are those who would spend the day padding from swim-up bar to beachfront chaise and then there are the rest of us, those who see the Caribbean for what it's lately become—one long, gorgeous, blue-water swath of nonstop athletic activity. Whether you disport yourself snorkeling or scuba diving, sailing or windsurfing, hiking or cycling, playing tennis or chasing Titleists, a vacation in the islands has taken on new purpose.

And the time to go is now. Spring and summer offer the adventure-seeking traveler lower rates and uncrowded venues. In the relaxed months just ahead, there is also time to get to know the residents, who are currently preserving their bounteous islands by turning underwater reefs and hiking mountains into protected parkland. Now you can take away memories even more satisfying than sunset piña coladas.

Jamaica's Sporting Life

Jamaica is duffers paradise.

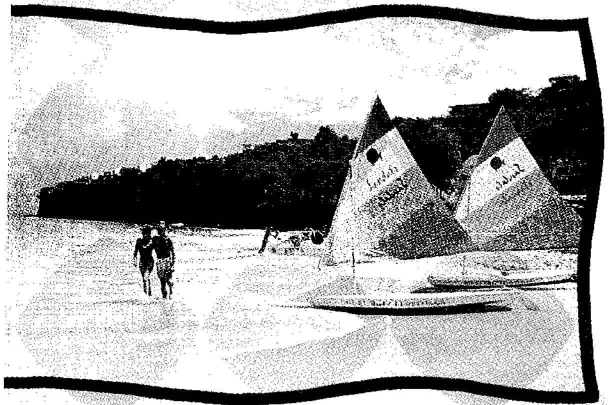
Sports in **Jamaica** are as much a part of the island fabric as its Blue Mountain coffee, magnificent great houses, and winding roads. Island athletes have long made waves in track and field, cricket, and basketball. And you can't help but get in the swim. For underwater explorers, there are first-rate dive operations set up all across the island—on the seven-mile beach at **Negril** with its fine patches of spur and groove coral; at **Montego Bay**, fringed by vibrant underwater walls and a profusion of bright sponges; at **Runaway Bay** with its popular dive sites—Canyon, Split Rock, Shipwreck Reef, Spanish Anchor, and Airplane Wreck; and at **Ocho Rios**, where a towering wall with drops of sixty to three-thousand feet beckons within swimming distance of shore.

Boating and fishing are big lures in Jamaica where blue marlin is the prize catch. Tennis has long been a staple of the north coast, and there is golfing galore—eleven courses with greens fees that start at just fourteen dollars and top off at $125. Be ready for staggering scenery, and caddies carrying clubs on their heads. A dozen miles from Montego Bay, Tryall Golf Club is a classic course and resort, built on a nineteenth-century sugar plantation. It was the scene of the Johnnie Walker World Championship for the past five years. An old fan named Arnold Palmer has called it "one of the most scenic layouts we play all year."

Golf is only part of the package at the **Half Moon Golf, Tennis & Beach Club**—400 acres of beachfront beauty that's six miles from the Montego Bay airport. The rambling Robert Trent Jones course, famous for its back-to-back challenges—the 535-yard third hole and the 362-yard fourth—ranks with the world's top resort courses. Half Moon has topnotch tennis, and the long, curving white beach is the launching pad for endless water sports.

Almost every sport under the sun can be found at **Sandals**, the all-inclusive, all-couples resorts scattered around the Caribbean. There are six Sandals locations in Jamaica, two in St. Lucia, one in Antigua, and another in Nassau. All are on the beach, and all offer myriad water sports with gear and instruction included. That means scuba and snorkeling, windsurfing and sailing, canoeing and ocean kayaking. Landlubbers can play volleyball, basketball, tennis, squash, and croquet. Golfers who are guests at any of the six Jamaica resorts have free access to the 18-hole, par-71 Sandals Golf & Country Club in Ocho Rios. Each Sandals resort is equipped with a health club and weight room, offers supervised workouts, and has a "Fit Shape" regimen that combines healthy eating and fitness activities.

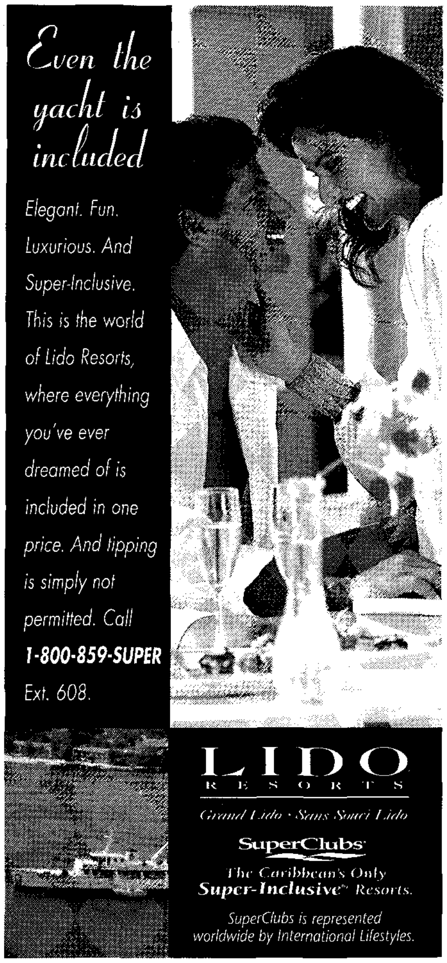
You sweat in style at **Sans Souci** and **Grand Lido**, two upscale Jamaica properties that are part of the all-inclusive SuperClubs group. At Sans Souci in Ocho Rios, 111 roomy suites are built into the seaside cliffs. There you can avail yourself of six free treatments in Charlie's Spa, shuttle service to the SuperClubs' own 18-hole golf course at Breezes Runaway Bay, and unlimited water sports. At the 200-suite Grand Lido, nestled in Bloody Bay at Negril, you can jog or walk forever on a seven-mile beach, one of the great strands in the Caribbean. Along with water sports and fitness classes, a 147-foot yacht takes guests out on daily sunset cruises.



Sunfish poised on a secluded Caribbean inlet.

Avid sports enthusiast David Butwin has traveled extensively in the Caribbean and written about its sporting side for a number of national publications.

cover: (*clockwise from top left*) Sandals snorkelers; scuba diver at the Anse Chastanet; sailing in Montego Bay; parasailing in St Thomas. © Steve Simonsen.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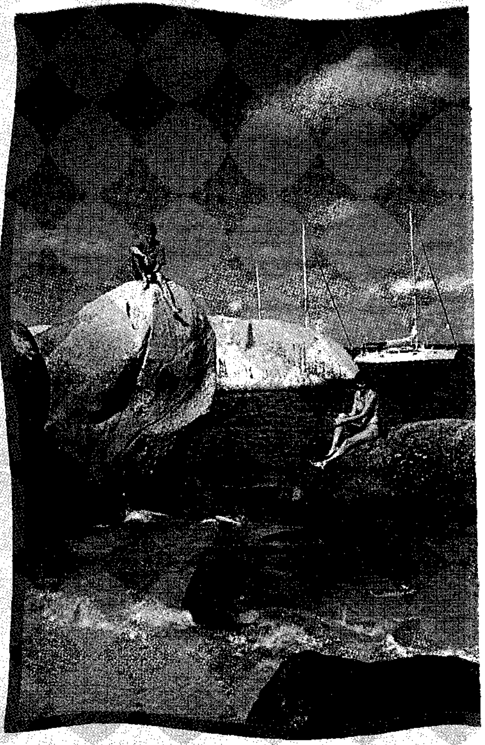
Yachts of Fun

Sailors know **The British Virgin Islands** for its ideal yachting—favorable winds; a wide, blue course called Sir Francis Drake Channel that functions as a sort of yachting interstate; and little islands never more than a day's cruise apart. Many charter for a week, but a day's excursion from the main island of **Tortola**, in a roomy schooner or wide-deck multihull, can get you to the outer islands—**Virgin Gorda**, **Jost Van Dyke**, **Anegada**, **Norman**, or **Dead Man's Chest**.


Day-trippers repair to Virgin Gorda's Devil Bay.

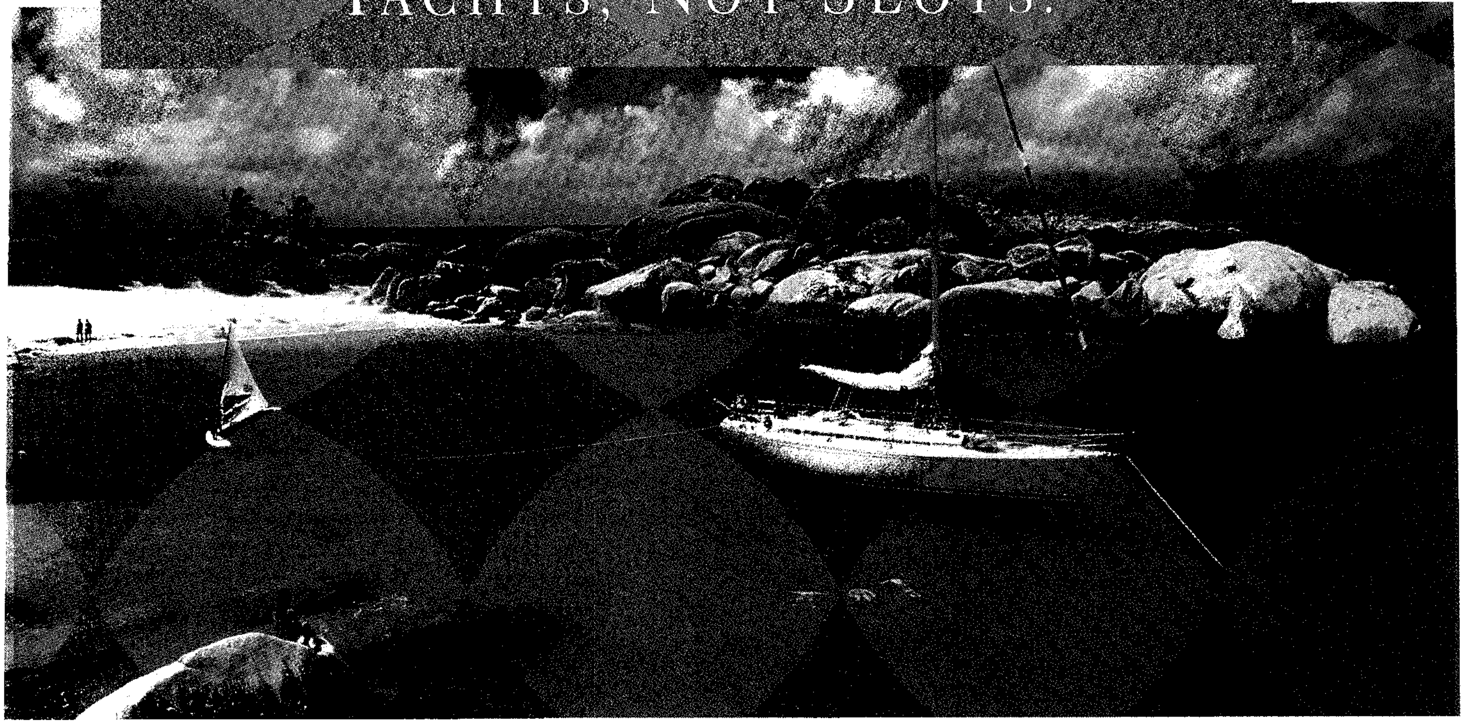
There is prime diving here in The British Virgins Islands. RMS Rhone, the best wreck dive in the Caribbean, was dashed in the Great Hurricane of 1867 with 313 aboard. The wreck is preserved as a marine park on a sandy bottom off tiny Salt Island, just southeast of Tortola. Another wreck prized by divers, Chikuzen, is teeming with big rays, horse-eye jacks, and barracuda. Prime diving spot Blonde Rock has ledges, tunnels, and caves that are home to crabs, lobsters, fan corals, and hordes of reef fish. B.V.I. beaches can rival any in the Caribbean. On Tortola, Smuggler's Cove on the western tip is fine for snorkeling; Apple Bay may be the island's top surfing beach. Long Bay, a lovely mile-long arc of white sand, is home to the fine **Long Bay Beach Resort & Villas**. Along with its varied watery pleasures, Long Bay has full tennis packages—lessons, free court time, and ball machine. Due later this month is a second swimming pool.

Perhaps the optimum way to see the Virgin Islands, or any other cluster of Caribbean islands, is by chartered yacht. **Port Yacht Charters**, out of Port Washington, New York, promises to fit you with the right boat and the right crew on the right date. Most of its charters are crewed. Whether you sail the Virgins or use St. Martin, Antigua, or St. Vincent as a base, you follow the wind and your own whim. One price covers meals, drinks, and whatever water toys (kayaks are popular) you order.

Choose a Cruise

If you choose to cruise on something larger—say, an 1,800-passenger liner—you can still make sports and fitness part of your daily regimen. All five ships of **Celebrity Cruises**—Meridian, Century, Galaxy, Horizon, and Zenith—ply the Caribbean on cruises of seven, ten, or eleven days, and some could be mistaken for floating spas. Indeed, Galaxy and Century have impressive health clubs and their own sports directors. Celebrity ships can arrange active shore excursions—golf and tennis, water sports, and hiking. Horizon can get you on the two premier golf courses at Casa de Campo, a plush Dominican Republic resort.

YACHTS, NOT SLOTS.



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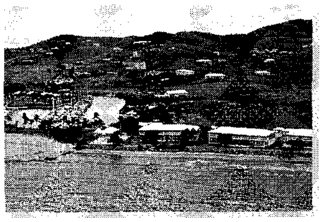

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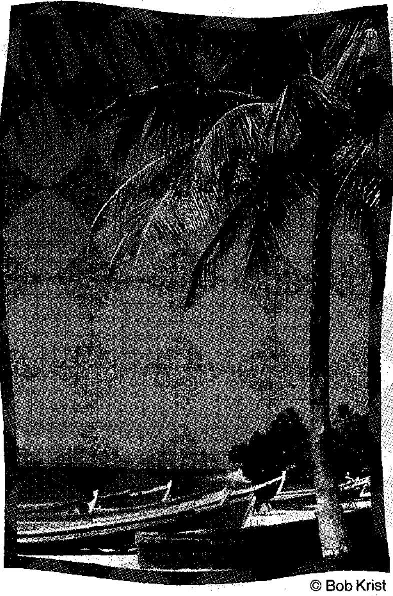
The Fairest of Fairways

Puerto Rico, one of the most sports-minded of the Caribbean islands, throws open its arms to visiting jocks. Surfer, golfer, tennis player, angler, sailor, windsurfer, or scuba diver will find a home here. Golf is well established with thirteen courses, eight of championship level. The best of them belly up to the island's premier resorts outside of San Juan. West of San Juan, the adjoining Hyatt resorts, Dorado Beach and Cerromar, share four Robert Trent Sr. 18-holers. Golf's wise-cracking troubadour, Chi Chi Rodriguez, learned to play here, has a home at the resort, and is often on the links. Dorado's narrow and scenic East Course is the plum of the four, and its thirteenth hole is the tenderest of traps, a double dogleg, par-five 540-yarder with a spectacular cliff top green. Golfers never tire of the Gary Player layout at Palmas del Mar, a palm-drenched resort (it was once a coconut plantation) near Humacao on the southeast coast. Holes eleven through fifteen are known as the toughest stretch of five in the Caribbean.

Near Fajardo, the spectacular luxury resort, El Conquistador, has restyled its Arthur Hills course with glowing results, and designer George Fazio has also left his impressive imprint at the Westin Rio Mar Beach Resort at the foot of majestic **El Yunque**, the only rain forest in the U.S. National Forest system. A towering visitors center, **El Portal**, has recently opened, offering exhibits, films, and stunning views of the rain forest laced with jungly hiking trails.

On Puerto Rico's northwest coast, the colorful little town **Rincón**, with a half-dozen reef-lined Atlantic beaches, has become a surfing HQ. Off the south coast, kayakers ply mangrove channels by day, phosphorescent bays by night, while seasoned divers explore the dramatic wall that drops thousands of feet into the Caribbean. Windsurfers will find every variety of wave and wind just off the shores of Condado, Isla Verde, and Ocean Park, San Juan's sandy resort strips. Deep-sea fishing excursions can be lined up at the handsome **Club Náutico de San Juan**; marlin country lies in the deeps just north of the island.

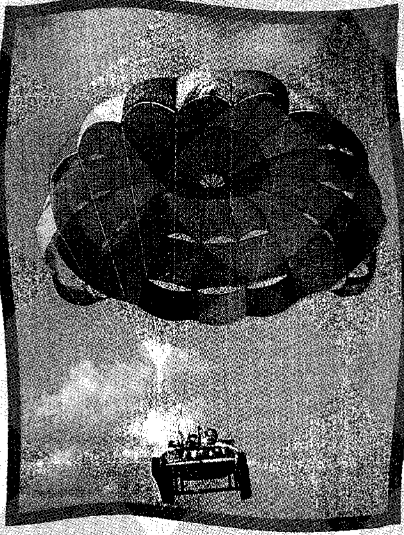


© Bob Krist

Colorful craft bejewel Puerto Rico's coastline.

Take the Plunge

Think **Cayman Islands** and you think world-class diving waters: aqua surf lapping up on Seven-Mile Beach in Grand Cayman, the largest of the three-island group; gin-clear depths off Little Cayman and Cayman Brac. On **Grand Cayman**, an easy hour's flight from Miami, there are two golf courses—a Jack Nicklaus links at the Hyatt Regency Grand Cayman, and The Links at Safehaven, an 18-holer on West Bay Road. There's tennis everywhere, bicycles for rent (no hills on this atoll-flat isle), hiking on the Mastic Trail, morning jogs on the long, flat beaches. Grand Cayman may be the busiest and most developed of the three islands, but don't sell short its diving potential—sixty miles of drop-offs, underwater visibility of 100 to 150 feet, easygoing water temps of seventy-seven to eighty-three degrees. For an introduction, take a trip by catamaran to Stingray City in North Sound where you can snorkel amid groups of as many as fifteen giant stingrays. Or study the floppy critters from the confines of the glass-bottomed catamaran.



Bird's-eye view of The Cayman Islands.

Cayman Brac, ninety miles to the northeast, is diving heaven, but you can also get an eye-opening workout by hiking a scenic trail. The Bluff comprises 140-foot cliffs honeycombed with sinkholes and ancient caves that keep Cayman pirate legends alive. Look for frigate birds, peregrine falcons, brown boobies, and the rare Cayman Brac Parrot. Thanks to its splendid isolation and stiff environmental laws, Cayman Brac secrets myriad splendors in its turquoise waters. There are two full-service dive resorts and fifty dive sites. Reefs begin a few yards out and veer downward 6,000-feet for a full quarter of a mile.

The smaller **Little Cayman**, five miles away, is a marvel of pristine lagoons, mangrove-thick wetlands, and orchid-laced swamps, all protected by The National Trust. Here, you'll share a haven with West Indian whistling ducks, wild iguanas, herons, and a large nesting colony of red-footed boobies. Practiced divers head for Bloody Bay Wall, a 1,200-foot vertical plunge that is prized by the international underwater set. Maybe you'll catch a glimpse of the illustrious Molly, Little Cayman's gentle, giant manta. Colorful coral gardens, swaying sea plumes, and brilliant tropical fish flourish among the island's fifty dive sites. Hole up at one of Little Cayman's five dive resorts. Take a day and fish the coast or Tarpon Pond for bonefish and small tarpon.

Bonaire, a gracious Dutch-influenced island, also protects its surrounding reef as a marine park and, thanks to a new campaign, is making sure that snorkelers and scuba divers are given equal consideration. Snorkelers, often regarded as the

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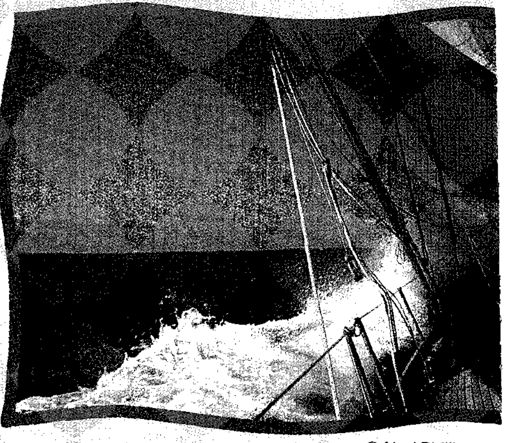
poor cousins of divers, are treated to briefings and slide shows, with trips organized to a dozen designated sites. Divers of any stripe will fancy the **Sunset Beach Hotel**, which sets up excursions to a variety of reefs, only five to twenty-five minutes offshore. Tennis, volleyball, and a gorgeous beach are right in your front yard.

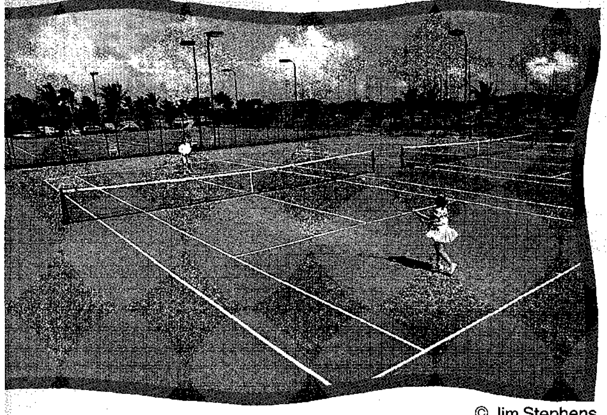
On stylish, beach-blessed **Anguilla**, the 100-room **Sonesta Beach Resort** will wrap you in a Moorish spell. The hand-painted arches and other architectural flourishes will put you in mind of *Casablanca*, but nobody who went to Rick's got to avail themselves of the pleasures of Rendezvous Bay—windsurfing, scuba diving, snorkeling, kayaking, twenty-four hour tennis, a full health club, and a pearl of a pool.


Leeward in St. Barthélemy. © Ned Phillips

On verdant and luxurious **St. Lucia**, presided over by the twin Piton peaks, the chic **Anse Chastanet Hotel**'s sole physical demand on its guests is that they climb one hundred steps (a sort of tropical StairMaster) to get from the beach to the hillside rooms and restaurant. There is spectacular diving in the reefs just offshore, and a well-equipped dive shop and training facility are based at the hotel.

Cool and laissez-faire **St. Barts** doesn't broadcast its athletic assets, it lets you discover them at your own pace and whim. Water sports are an island specialty. At the cosmopolitan, fourteen villa-suite **Carl Gustaf Hotel**, the house yacht will take you away to deserted isles, snorkeling reefs, and sportfishing grounds. Windsurfing, a French passion, is ideal off the beaches of St. Jean, Flamands, and Grand Cul de Sac. Sunday hikers will like the scenic trail stretching from a hilltop in Colombier down to one of the prettiest of the island's twenty-odd pocket beaches.

On **St. Croix**, largest of the United States Virgin Islands and also the quaintest, with its historic sugar mills and Danish colonial architecture, you can find every level of sporting pleasure. The stylish 150-room **Buccaneer**, perched on a palmy hill above a wide crescent beach, sports top-notch golf and tennis (eight courts). It also has a full health spa and fitness center. At the intimate, beachside **Tamarind Reef Hotel**, diving is a house specialty. You can take scuba lessons in the large thirty by sixty foot freshwater pool, and snorkelers can plunge into a lovely cove beside the hotel's beach.


Working the backhand on Tamarind Reef's courts. © Jim Stephens

If St. Croix doesn't have it, St. Thomas or St. John surely will. St. Thomas is sassy, busy, a shopper's haven, and yachting paradise with the Caribbean's largest

The Sporting Side of the Caribbean

concentration of chartered sailboats. By contrast, St. John is small, tranquil, and jungly, with most of its dense green hillsides and crystalline reefs protected as national parkland.

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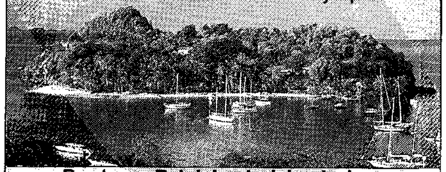

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Expert surfer plies the waves of Barbados.

The island's newest golf course, a lovely Robert Trent Jones, Jr. layout called the Royal Westmoreland Golf Club, meanders over a 480-acre former sugar plantation overlooking the coves and beaches of the west coast. There's championship golf at Sandy Lane; Club Rockley Barbados has a challenging nine-holer; and Belair is a sporty par-three on the rugged east coast.

For jogging or beachcombing, the west coast is an undulating and intriguing stretch of beach some fifteen miles from Almond Beach in Bridgetown. This calm Caribbean shoreline is also ripe for scuba diving, snorkeling, and swimming.

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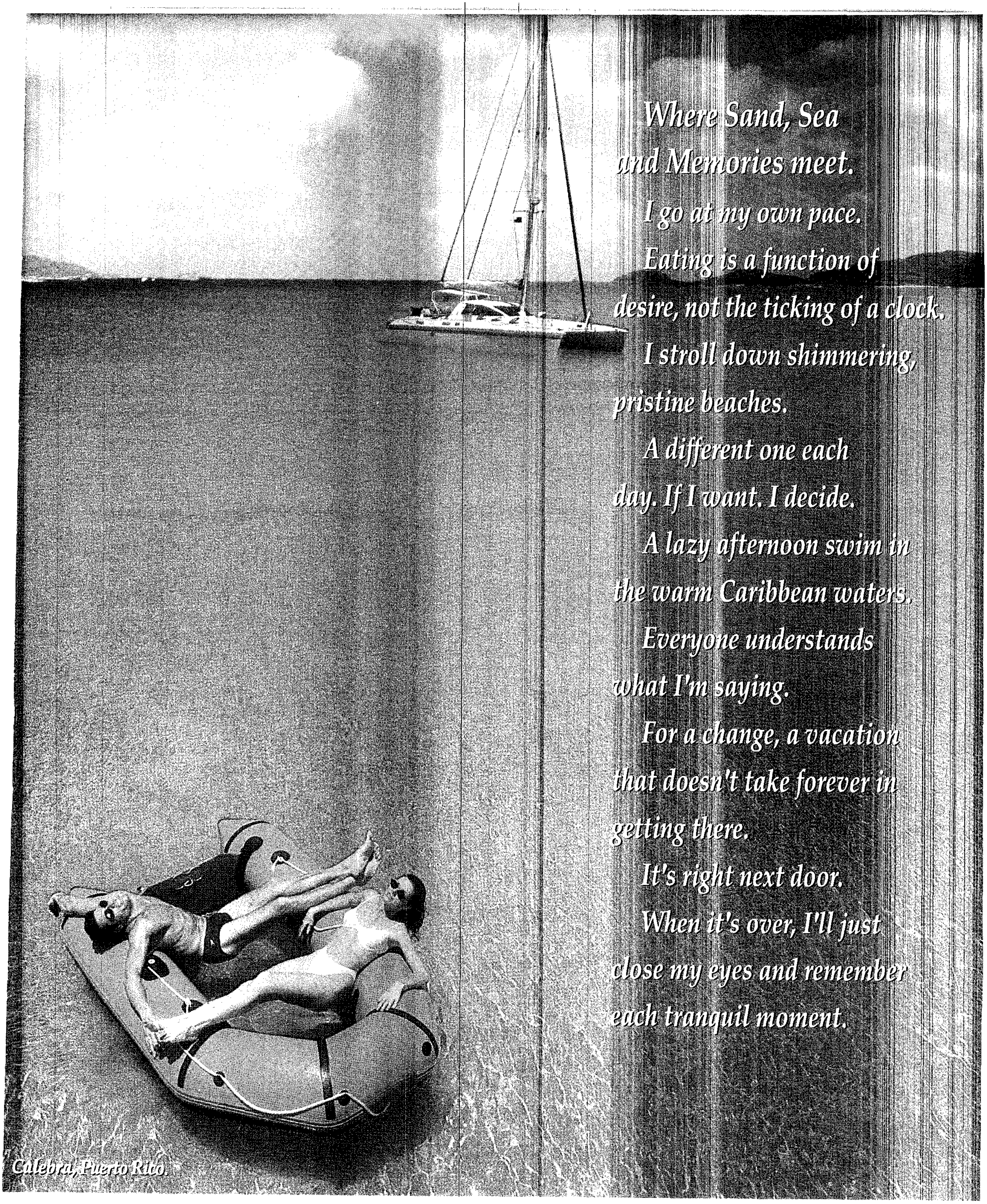

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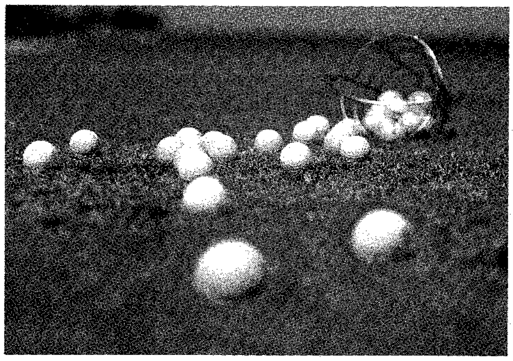

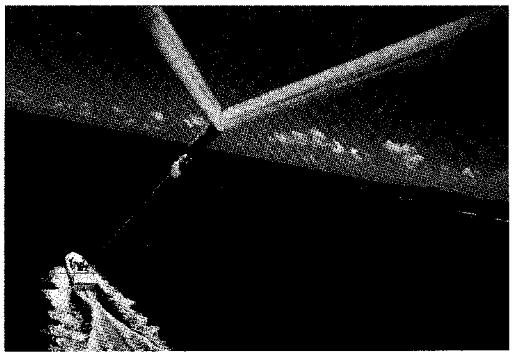

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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

KEEP OUT

As jury selection begins in the trial of Timothy McVeigh, the accused Oklahoma City bomber, a writer recalls a visit to a place that is now barred to most outsiders:

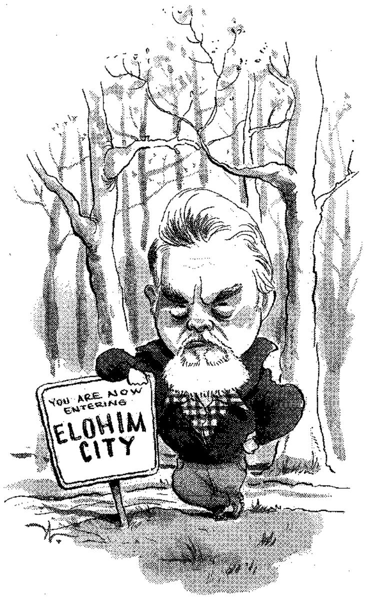
In the autumn of 1995, some six months after the bombing, I was invited to spend a weekend at Elohim City, the white-separatist religious enclave in the Ozarks which has become notorious as a haven for anti-government militants, some of whom were reportedly friends of McVeigh. I had introduced myself over the phone as the son and grandson of Baptist preachers, and as someone who was writing about racial-separatist movements.

The road into the four-hundred-acre compound was muddy and steep. At the top of a rise, I parked next to a big brown igloo, made of a substance like hardened foam, that turned out to be the Elohim church. I walked down a path, past mobile homes and modest wooden houses scattered among oaks and pines. The air smelled pleasantly of woodsmoke. Robert G. Millar, the founder of Elohim City, greeted me graciously at the door to his mobile home. We sat down at the kitchen table. Millar, who is in his seventies and is small, white-bearded, and fit, told me that he had been reared a Mennonite in Canada and suffered a heart attack at thirty-four. While he was recuperating, he studied the Hebrew roots of various words in the King James Bible and came to believe that certain white Northern Europeans were the "inheritors of the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." He brought his flock to the Ozarks in 1973.

Millar suggested that we take a walk. We proceeded at a brisk pace through the woods. Whenever we met children, Millar stopped to give them a hug, greeting them with oddly Edwardian cheer: "I say! Good show!" They all called him "Grandpa."

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MICHAEL WITTE

That evening, after dinner, I passed some time with a young man named Pete. While sitting on the porch of the trailer belonging to my hosts, Ed and Mary Ruth, who have since left Elohim, Pete boasted of his preparedness for the coming race war. Millar bounded over to us and invited me to preach the next day, knowing that, as a preacher's son, I couldn't say no. Pete and I went inside to join Ed and Mary Ruth. Mary Ruth's father, Richard Wayne Snell, had allegedly conspired to destroy the Oklahoma City federal building twelve years before. (On the day of the actual bombing, Snell was executed in Oklahoma for killing a pawnshop owner.) We watched a TV show, starring Chuck Norris, in which a religious fanatic blows up his childhood neighborhood. On the table next to me was a holiday card emblazoned with a swastika. Once Chuck Norris had killed the fanatic, I went to my room and worried about my sermon.



At the Sunday service, a dozen or so families stood before the congregation, and sang an upbeat song or told about a good thing that had happened during the week. Many expressed thanks that one young man had decided to return to the fold after being tempted by "the world." Soon it was my turn to speak. I had decided to offer three "parables" from real life about nationalistic communities whose separatist behavior had made them miserable or led to their demise. I spoke briefly, and when I had finished everyone clapped politely.

Millar commented on how "interesting" the histories of different people were. In the same pleasant tone, he added approvingly that my words reminded him of something Adolf Hitler had once said. (It was something about "blood and land," which Millar helpfully translated from the German.) Then he mounted the pulpit and delivered a full-throated sermon on the theme of how God would "send destruction" but save a remnant of humanity to rebuild—an act, he said, of "divine eugenics."

After church, I joined a family supper at the home of one of Millar's sons. Over turkey with all the trimmings, Millar said it was possible that McVeigh—whom he said he had never met—had been set up by the A.T.F. He explained that *elohim* was a Hebrew plural form of "God," adding, "I think that we are incarnate *elohim*." Who, I asked, did he mean by "we"? "Me," he replied, then added, "Her," indicating his wife, who smiled weakly. His eyes settled on me as he said, "You—probably." A little later, Millar mentioned a Pastor Jones, whom he had met in the fifties, and said that he had seemed to him "a good pastor." Did I remember Pastor Jones? It took me a moment. "Oh, yes," I said. "Jim Jones, the man in Guyana." Yes, I remembered him.

WARMING UP

Baseball resumes this week, even though the Mets and the Yankees, thanks to a schedule that at last accepts the realities of early-April weather in these parts, won't turn up at home for another ten days. In the interval, some passing moments of spring training remain in view:

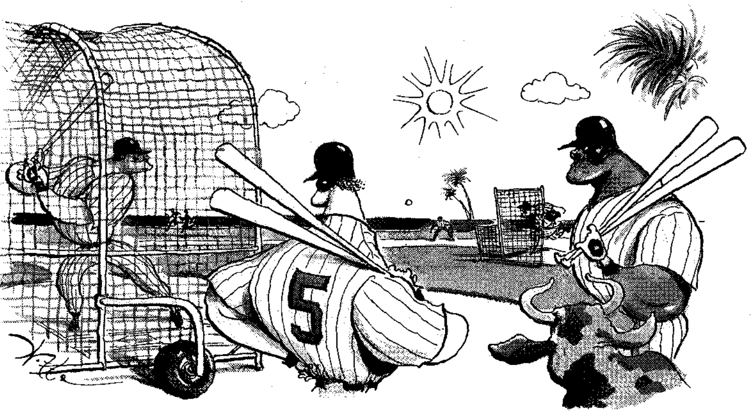
•

Goose Gossage, the memorable Yankee-bullpen retiree, was invited down to Tampa by the Yanks to lend a hand with the transformation of young Mariano Rivera into the same, nervous-making stopper's role at the stadium this year. In the hall outside the clubhouse, the Goose was invited to recall if he'd ever felt the icy fingers of fear out there in mid-diamond and mid-crisis.

"Sure I did," he said, his face agleam over the famous muttonchops. "Every game, I felt like I'd been dropped into somebody's back yard, where this big ole dog was waiting for me. My only idea was to make it over the fence before he bit me in the ass."

•

Deion Sanders, transformed from intergalactic-level Cowboys cornerback to earthling Cincinnati Reds outfielder, drew a lead-off base on balls against the Yankees' Andy Pettitte, in Tampa. Up in the press box, Joel Sherman, of the *Post*, cogitating Sanders' yearlong absence from the warm-weather pastime and thus his possible ignorance of Pettitte's wizard pickoff move, held up a dollar bill and said, "Five to one he's picked off." The bet was accepted on the spot by the Dayton *Daily News* scribe Hal McCoy, who reached into his wallet, extracted a fiver, and handed it to Sherman in a smooth, unbroken motion: Sanders, writhing in the dirt, had been picked.



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Veteran fans spotting George Hendrick, the lean, large Cardinals batting coach, behind the batting cage in St. Petersburg one morning were reassured to note that his blindingly white uniform pants extended downward to within a millimetre of his scarlet spikes. Back in the seventies, when Hendrick was an outfielder with the Cards and Indians and A's, he was the originator, the true Versace, of the long-pants fashion that still prevails almost everywhere. He was also one of the first major leaguers to keep a vow of silence in his dealings with the press—but here, at least, he has softened. "No shortening up on the pants yet, George?" was one reporter's searching query.

"Nup," he replied.

If style points counted, Hendrick would be in Cooperstown.

•

Lots of talk in Florida and Arizona about last year's record eruption of home runs: 4,962 of them, all told. There were a hundred and forty-one grand slams—an inflation that may have given birth to a new fan locution, "granny." In Tampa, Darryl Strawberry smacked a granny against a Cincinnati rookie named Brewer, arousing mild sounds of pleasure from the Yankee rooters—more hum than yell, this time.

The pitchers were also wincing in Arizona, where triples—everybody's favorite base hit—were more the shot du jour. In Scottsdale, however, the Athletics' Mark McGwire launched a first-inning three-run homer against the Giants' Kirk Rueter that was greeted with reverent silence. Favoring the Hale-Bopp, low-horizon trajectory, the line drive cleared the heavily populated grassy berm behind the left-field fence without a vestige of droop or wane, and vanished, perhaps also to reorbit in another twenty-four hundred years.

•

The funky old spring ballparks have just about disappeared. Some of the replacement "facilities" are pleasing in design but implacably resemble their big-city counterparts. In Mesa, the Cubs just tore down the cramped but delightful HoHoKam Park, with its splintery redwood façade, in favor of a mocha-colored, all-concrete version, with seats for twelve thousand fans, a massive, illuminated left-field scoreboard, an the now obligatory earsplitting rock-trac intros of each home player's turn at ba

An exception to all this is the Minnesota Twins' Lee County Sports Comple in Fort Myers, which went up only si years ago but presents an airy, rustic appearance, complete with a barn-cupol stair tower. Here the music is eight-trac hits from the sixties, and you can look ou beyond left field and enjoy the silent, slow moving, environmentally impeccable loca entertainment. Cows.

ON THE WATERFRONT

On a recent raw, windy morning a rush hour, Albert Butzel, the founder and chief agitator of the Hudson River Park Alliance, edged his way down the service road of the West Side Highway, where none but the foolhardy normally venture on foot. "For a hundred years," Butzel said, "the waterfront of Manhattan was made inaccessible by maritime commerce. By 1970, all that had come to an end. Suddenly, the question became, 'Can we capture this waterfront for the public?' " Butzel formed the alliance last year to push for a three-hundred-million-dollar plan to create a park stretching four and a half miles from Fifty-ninth Street to Battery Park—a development that could finally enable New Yorkers, like residents of other great port cities, to enjoy a natural resource that has profoundly shaped their history. Now, it seems, the alliance's effort has paid off. Last week, an insider in Albany disclosed that Governor Pataki was set to announce that he would appropriate funding for the new park.

If the project goes forward, it will bring an end to a classic New York battle that began more than twenty years ago, when West Side activists got together to fight the expanded highway project known as Westway. Butzel spent eight years opposing the project in court on behalf of a group called the Clean Air Campaign. Their efforts eventually killed Westway but left the waterfront a fenced-off wilderness. In 1992, the city and the state each pledged a hundred million dollars to develop and build a new park. But some of the same people who had opposed Westway now argued that the plan was compromised by the inclusion of shops, restaurants, and other commercial enterprises, which had been proposed to make the park self-sustaining.

Butzel, a wiry fellow in black beret and blue ski parka, is a veteran of these wars. "My history is a Hudson River history," he said, as he threaded his way through concrete pylons underneath the ship terminal at Fiftieth Street. "I started as a lawyer in this field in 1965, when Con Edison proposed to build a power plant up at Storm King, in the Hudson Highlands. I litigated that case for fifteen years." (He won.) Butzel argued that the new park would never get built unless it included income-producing amenities, and he persuaded a number of environmental groups to join his side.

In addition to converting political skeptics, the alliance has taken on numerous private developers who—encouraged by the resurgence in the city's real-estate market—are after a piece of the waterfront. Butzel has been outraged to see the city and the state relinquish one prime chunk after another; he is hoping that the Governor's announcement will reverse the tide.

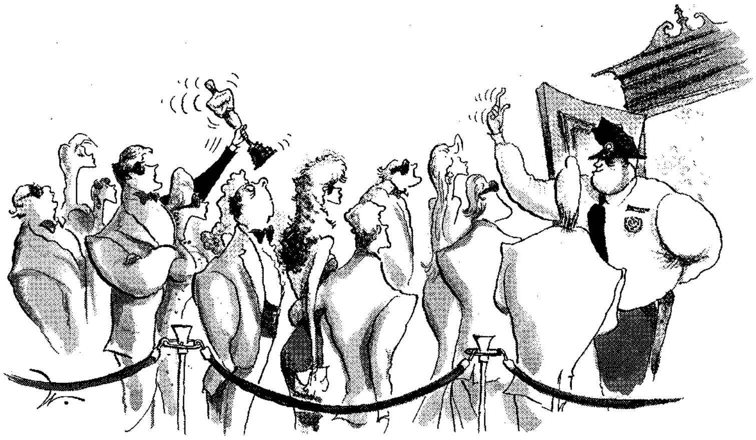
Butzel's fingers were getting numb, but he flipped open a booklet labelled "Concept Plan," which showed wedges of meadow and, in place of the highway, a tree-lined boulevard. He walked out onto Pier 84, a long lick of asphalt that has begun crumbling into the river. "This is what the park is really about," he said. "The piers will be cleaned up and opened up for public recreation." He went on to describe a transformation that would replace rot with tennis and basketball courts, cafés and concert pavilions. Turning his back to the river, he added, "I love it because you can look at the city in a way you can't usually do." It was true: there, in the gray light of morning, was a vision that, in recent years, only the gulls have been lucky enough to enjoy.

STAGEFRIGHT

George Plimpton, the participatory journalist, faxed this report from the Oscars:

Attending the rehearsals the day before the ceremonies, I got word that a gate-crasher had been nabbed by the security people. I was standing at a side entrance of the Shrine Auditorium when they brought him out in handcuffs. He was wearing a dinner jacket, his cummerbund askew so that the white of his dress shirt showed at his belt line. As he was hurried to a police car, he spotted me. "Hey, George," he called. "I was only trying to do the sort of thing you do." I paled. It had indeed occurred to me to work it out somehow so that I was up on the great stage, just to get the feel of it.

I asked a Pinkerton man about the crasher, whose name turned out to be Scott Kerman. According to a press release he sent out to announce his intentions, Kerman had "snuck into over three hundred concerts and sporting events—including twenty-five World Series games and five Super Bowls," and had written a book on how to do it, "No Ticket? No Problem!" My credentials were somewhat firmer. I had a role in one of the nominated documentaries, "When We Were Kings"—the story of the famous fight between George Foreman and Muhammad Ali in Zaire, in 1974, which I had covered as a reporter.



Inside the auditorium, large placards with the stars' names on them, like cardboard tombstones, had been placed in the appropriate seats. "George Foreman" was immediately behind "Muhammad Ali," perfectly positioned to lean forward and bop his rival over the head in retaliation for what had happened in Zaire. Leon Gast and David Sonenberg, who directed and produced the film, had seats just behind. Leon had been fretting for days over whether he should give his Oscar to Ali—a highly dramatic gesture, considering that it would be witnessed by a billion or so people. His wife, Geri, was dead against it. "I want it home," she said.

That afternoon, mock winners came out of the audience—young actors, by the look of them—and were handed a wooden replica of Oscar by the presenter. Roving camera crews called "creepies" moved in to catch their reactions. A stage manager asked if I would care to be a mock accepter. I jumped at the chance. The award was for achievement in music. Gregory Hines, the presenter, opened the envelope. "And the Oscar goes to Patrick Doyle, for 'Hamlet.' " I threw up my arms and headed for the stage, the creepies crouching along in front of me. I looked out at the auditorium to savor the sight. I said into the microphone, "I wish to thank Mr. Shakespeare and his charming wife, Anne"—I waved at a couple out in the semi-darkness—"and Queen Elizabeth, our patron, and all the folks down at the Globe Theatre. . . . " I asked if there were any extra wooden Oscars around. No, that was the only one they had. Sorry.

On Oscar night, I was seated under the overhang of the balcony, five seats in from the aisle, with a railing on my right and a ten-foot drop on the other side—hardly the best starting point for a rush to the stage. I thought vaguely of trying to pass myself off as a "seat filler"—one of a large group of men and women in evening clothes poised just outside the auditorium to fill the seats of those who are called by nature or summoned to the stage. But this was idle conjecture. I'd been there. I'd thanked Shakespeare.

So I stayed put and enjoyed myself. I watched them come in—Ali with a blue sapphire collar button at his throat, Foreman with a diamond pin of an eagle clutching a snake. When Tommy Lee Jones opened the envelope and got the first words out—" 'When We . . . ' "—a roar went up.

Afterward, Leon and David asked if I was going to the Governors Ball. "I haven't got a ticket," I said.

"But that's the place to be. You'll have to crash."

So that's what I did. Leon slipped me his Oscar, and I held it aloft as they waved me on. I hoped no one noticed that my cummerbund was askew. ♦

"Keep Out," Scott L. Malcomson; "Warming Up," Roger Angell; "On the Waterfront," James Traub; "Stagefright," George Plimpton.

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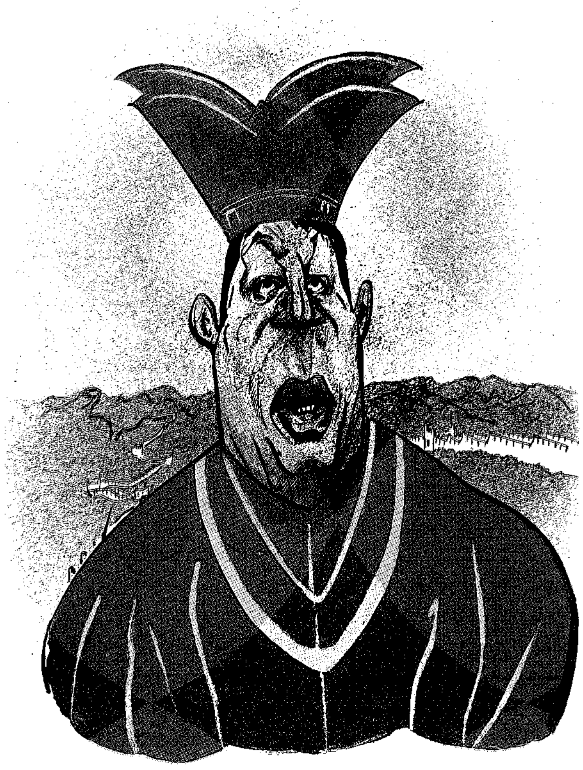
LETTER FROM BEIJING

AMERICAN CONFUCIUS

Do the Chinese understand Al Gore better than we do?

BY JOE KLEIN

CONFUCIUS said, "A young man should be a good son at home and an obedient young man abroad, sparing of speech but trustworthy in what he says." Albert Gore, Jr., has always seemed a natural-born Confucian: respectful of his elders, deferential to his superiors, ever loyal, a perfect protégé. And so perhaps it was inevitable that the Vice-President would say nothing of consequence—relatively few public words at all, in fact—during his cautious, solemn first official visit to China. When he landed at the airport in Beijing, he said nothing. (He did subsequently release a perfunctory arrival statement to the press.) The next morning, when he was publicly greeted by his host, Prime Minister Li Peng, at the Great Hall of the People, he made no official opening remarks. At the "social dinner" that Li held in his honor that evening, he didn't even propose a toast. The protocol experts accompanying Gore offered elaborate and nearly plausible explanations for his semi-mummified condition (toasts are given at state banquets, not "social dinners," an Embassy official explained, for instance), but the overall effect of his performance was austere to the point of sterility. He went to meetings. He visited the Great Wall and the Forbidden City. He smiled and waved. He hid in plain sight. Ambushed by an impatient gantlet of Chinese journalists, Gore reluctantly admitted that his meetings with Li Peng had been "good, very successful, very productive." And at his concluding—and almost entirely newsless—news conference he revealed that his meeting with President Jiang Zemin had been "productive, friendly, searching, and wide-ranging."



When in China: polite, persistent, but non-confrontational.

STEVE BRODNER

The Vice-President's crustacean reticence was duly noted, and ridiculed, by many of the American reporters traveling with him. The visit was not exactly a public-relations triumph; indeed, it may well compound the damage that his marginal involvement in the Democrats' fund-raising imbroglio has done his reputation this winter. But it seems only fair to add that the Vice-President's visit always was going to be more form than substance. The Clinton Administration's "constructive engagement" with China, after all, is intended to slowly raise relations with China to the same level as those with Russia, through a series of polite and persistent but non-confrontational summit meetings. In that light, Gore's trip was a Confucian tour de force, exactly the sort of disciplined, respectful performance that the

Chinese appreciate. The chasm between those sensibilities—between the American desire for the appearance of action and the Chinese obsession with the appearance of order—is the conundrum at the heart of Sino-American relations; and Gore's tendency to err on the side of starched propriety is the personal quality that served his mission well.

Gore's public stiffness is a well-known mystery. In private, he can be accessible, hilarious, and iconoclastic. Reporters travelling on his plane marvelled, as always, at the difference between his loose, off-the-record chats and the furious buttoning up that took place every time the cameras were on. It was obvious, though, that his intermittent awkwardness was intensified by the delicacy of the moment. The Justice Department is looking into the possibility that the Chinese government tried to buy influence with our government by orchestrating campaign contributions to various candidates, and to the Democratic Party, during the recent elections. Few foreign-policy specialists believe that the investigation will amount to much—except, perhaps, the discovery of a benighted attempt by the mainland Chinese to emulate the Taiwan Chinese, who have influenced American policy subtly and successfully for decades—but the press corps accompanying Gore was on the lookout for any stray sign of softness, harshness, uncertainty, awkwardness: anything that might indicate that the "scandal" was affecting Sino-American relations. And there were a few clumsy moments. The Gore staff three times revised its account of how and whether the campaign-finance scandal had been broached during the Vice-President's conversations with Li Peng. (The answer, ultimately, was yes, it had been broached, gingerly, in response to a question from Li.) Worse, the trip is probably destined to be remembered—by Americans, at least—only for Gore's stone-faced champagne toast, more a clunk than a clink, with Li Peng to celebrate the signing of billion-dollar business deals between the Chinese government and two American corporate giants, Boeing and General Motors. Gore's political opponents will no doubt find uses for the image of the Vice-President lifting a glass with the man who ordered the troops into Tiananmen Square, and Gore will no doubt attempt to explain that he was merely celebrating the creation of thousands of new American jobs.

But that's the trouble with "constructive engagement." The public images tend to be obsequious but memorable, while the concrete successes—the fact that Boeing, rather than a French company, got the contract—are hard to take pictures of. The uncomfortable reality for Al Gore was that in order for "constructive engagement" to succeed it was necessary that *nothing* unexpected happen while he was in China. Rigor mortis was his portfolio.

The Confucian ethic, which many Chinese intellectuals believe is a more powerful force in their culture than the bleak rhetorical residues of Marxism, transforms etiquette into theology. Your worth as a person is determined by your *public* actions, the deference you demonstrate: toward your parents and ancestors, of course, but also for a highly stylized system of rituals and ceremonies—the way you greet a stranger, speak, write, sip a cup of tea. Thus, the appearance of respect, which usually translates into a preternatural public placidity, is the threshold quality necessary for diplomatic success with the Chinese. Grandstanding—indeed, almost any sort of spontaneity—is a sure sign of disrespect, a demonstration of weakness and lack of discipline.

And so the Vice-President dutifully performed a dense choreography of meetings in the Great Hall of the People, trading amenities with his Chinese counterparts while the photographers had at them, and then nervously glancing at the three-by-five cards that contained his private talking points as the media departed and the meetings began. Nothing of substance on political, as opposed to commercial, issues—progress on human rights, say, or nuclear nonproliferation—appeared to emerge from any of these sessions. Nothing emerged except the substance of the ritual itself—a passive achievement that conferred legitimacy upon the likes of Li Peng, and provided yet more fodder, perhaps, for Gore's future opponents. But, then, a *real* breakthrough at a Vice-Presidential summit would be unseemly. The only noteworthy foreign-policy moments that were available to Gore's predecessors

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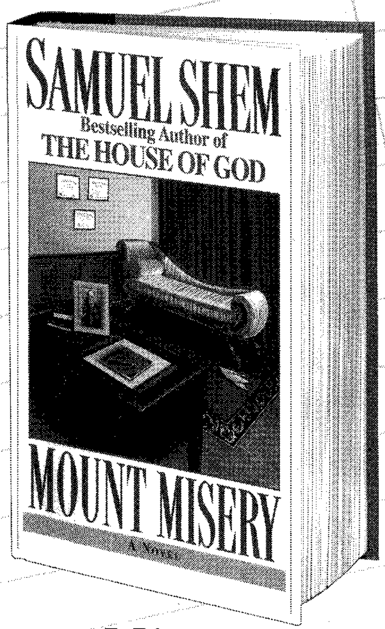

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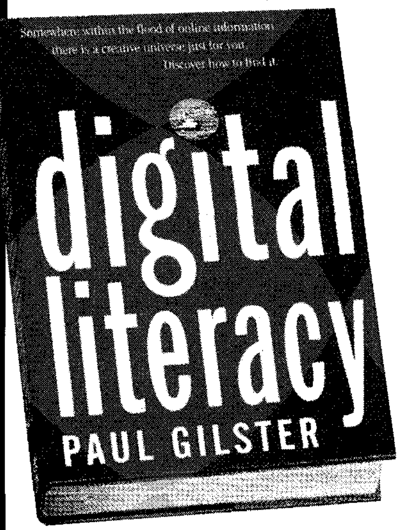
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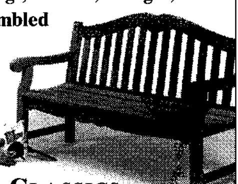

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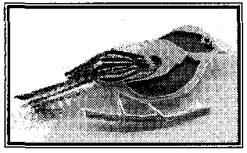

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were gaffes, funerals, and confrontations (Nixon's kitchen debate with Khrushchev comes to mind); heroism of any sort lies well outside the job description.

To be a truly perfect Confucian, the Vice-President would have had to go through his paces with an effortless grace, a quality that often seems beyond his capabilities: he strains too obviously for perfection. But he did have his moments in China. One was a speech that he delivered to the budding scientists and mathematicians at Qinghua University, in which he told the Chinese—respectfully but unequivocally—that they would never be accepted as full partners until they began to treat their people better. The admonition was couched in a masterly, subtle reference to the Tiananmen Square disaster: "There is often an unspoken subtext in the dialogue among nations. The toxic residue of injustices never yet acknowledged often prevents the reconciliation that is the indispensable prerequisite for new undertakings, new partnerships, and new hopes for the future."

It is not clear where, if anywhere, such sly virtuosity will get us with the Chinese. We still don't know them very well. But the impact on Gore's domestic political fortunes is easier to gauge: his straitened qualities clearly work to his disadvantage. Informality—indeed, a hint of rowdiness—is as deeply prized by the American electorate as it is scorned by the government of China. There was nothing even vaguely rowdy about the Vice-President's visit. He didn't venture into the streets of Beijing, where a colorful and chaotic street culture mocks the frozen austerity of the leadership. The day before he left China, a congressional delegation led by Newt Gingrich was scheduled to arrive, and *its* proposed itinerary seemed far more adventurous and typically American: defiant visits to Hong Kong and Taiwan, and an ostentatious Easter Sunday church appearance in Shanghai (drawing attention to the continuing repression of Roman Catholic priests and other religious figures). When I asked a Gore aide why the Vice-President hadn't done anything remotely informal, like visiting a village, he shrugged disconsolately and said, "Time and logistics. There were so many meetings we absolutely had to attend. And when you travel on official business, with an entourage like this, is there ever any way to actually *meet* the people?"

That is the Vice-President's dilemma. He is perpetually on official business, enthralled by the subservience of his office. An effective Vice-President is ever the obedient son, and Gore's natural predilections have made him more effective than most, but as his efforts to gain the Presidency intensify he will be judged by different standards, and the loyalty he has shown throughout his career will begin to appear more timid than discreet. That is the curse of the office—the reason George Bush was the only Vice-President since Martin Van Buren to succeed his President by winning an election. (And Bush had the advantage of running against Michael Dukakis, who appeared even more Vice-Presidential than he did.)

THERE is another Confucian parable—a famous one—that has some relevance here: The governor of She once told Confucius about a praiseworthy young man who had his own father arrested for stealing a sheep. The Master was not impressed. "Among my people, men of integrity do things differently," Confucius said. "A father covers up for his son, a son covers up for his father—and there is integrity in what they do." This needn't be taken literally. Even if the scandals plaguing the Clinton Administration evaporate, Al Gore will still be in the position of "covering up" for the President: he will have to defend the record of the past eight years. He will be the embodiment of the status quo—a position that his entire career seems to have been pointing toward. In Confucian China, to embody the status quo was the ultimate state of grace, a sign of total immersion in the sacred rituals. In American politics, it just means that you're a fat target, and it's the reason that Al Gore's path to the Presidency is likely to grow more cluttered and treacherous—and unlikely—as he proceeds. ♦

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JUST ASK FOR IT

The real key to technological innovation.

BY MALCOLM GLADWELL

On a sunny winter's day earlier this year, I watched the wedding-reception scene from the film "Steel Magnolias" on an ordinary-looking twenty-six-inch television at the NBC affiliate in Washington, D.C. Feature films on television have a flat, fuzzy look, and that's what I was expecting. But this was so different it was startling. The details of the dancing couples—the taffeta and silk and the bright colors splashing across the screen—were as fine as a photograph; the picture had such depth of focus it looked almost three-dimensional, and as I walked closer to the screen the resolution didn't get fuzzier and fuzzier, as is usually the case, but seemed to grow sharper and sharper.

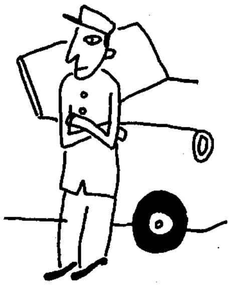
How was high-definition television invented? By exactly the opposite process of what we would have thought.

LOU BEACH

That ordinary-looking twenty-six-inch monitor was a high-definition, digital television set, and the room where I watched it is the world's first fully operational high-definition-television (or HDTV) station, an experimental project funded by the broadcasting industry. By Christmas of next year, there should be HDTV sets for sale in stores across the country, and late last month, following much debate, broadcasters promised that about half the nation's households would be able to receive high-definition programming within two and a half years. After a decade of anticipation and hype, HDTV is finally here, and it's not as good as advertised—it's better.

A standard television picture is made up of five hundred and twenty-five lines (reduced to approximately three hundred and ninety lines after transmission), which you can actually see if you put your eye right up to the screen. An HDTV picture, by contrast, is made up of a thousand and eighty lines. Since the picture is also larger, there's about ten times as much visual "information" crammed onto the same-size screen, and the TV picture has something like the richness and density of a film shown in a theatre. The picture is also digitally transmitted, which means that it comes in clearer and cleaner than the traditional television signal. It doesn't degrade when you get too far from the TV station. You never even need to adjust the color or the tint. Then, there's the sound: HDTV pipes in digital, not analogue, audio, and on six channels, not just two. It's the difference between spinning records on a sixties hi-fi and playing compact disks on one of those state-of-the-art surround-sound systems.

At the time of the First World War, when the phonograph was still a novelty, promoters would hold concerts where live performers would sing along with record players, sometimes pausing to let the recording be heard. "The most sensitive ear could not detect the slightest difference between the tone of the singer and the tone of the mechanical device," a London newspaper reported after one such concert. That statement seems absurd now, but it captures the strange constraints that technologies of reproduction place on the imagination: such is the magic—the immediacy—of the effect that it is all but impossible to conceive of how the quality of the reproduction could be better. You can judge only on the basis of what you have experienced. James McKinney, the manager of the experimental station, played me an HDTV tape of last year's Super Bowl, and, when I saw the tendons rippling on the arms of linebackers and the fleeting expressions of expectation and pain on the faces of the quarterbacks, my idea of what television could be was so drastically altered that I found myself cringing the next time I watched a normal set.



There's something a little weird, though, about HDTV. As dazzling as the new technology is, the story of how it came about isn't dazzling at all. The HDTV plot reads as if it ought to be optioned by C-SPAN. The Federal Communications Commission, worried about Japanese technological advances, announces a competition in 1987 for the development of a new, computer-age television set. A host of research teams apply, and work against tight deadlines. Meeting after meeting is held between federal officials and industry representatives. Much lobbying and political infighting ensue, and, in November of 1995, the F.C.C. awards the lucrative HDTV license to a consortium of television manufacturers. Here is how Joel Brinkley, in a recent book about the birth of HDTV, describes what one might have imagined to be high-definition television's most exciting moment, when two engineers solve the central technical problem facing digital transmission:

> Paik and Krauss went back to work: Write the program, put it in the computer, look at the tape. Go back to the desk. Trial and error, month after month. By spring 1989 the new formulations were yielding tiny improvements here and there. The fully compressed picture still looked rotten, but it was getting better.

What's odd about this is that we usually think of the process of innovation as dramatic. True breakthroughs are thought to involve paradigm shifts—in Thomas Kuhn's famous formulation—whereby the entire accepted order is overthrown and replaced with something unrecognizably new. We assume that behind every breakthrough there has to be a moment of transcendent inspiration: Newton is hit on the head by a falling apple; Archimedes leaps from his bathtub. And because we think of breakthroughs as inspirational we also think of them as wholly unpredictable. Researchers at 3M, once upon a time, came up with something that could only vaguely stick pieces of paper onto surfaces. The new adhesive seemed worthless until one 3M scientist decided to brush some of the stuff on page markers for his church hymnal. Voilà—the Post-it. Scientists at Upjohn were testing a new compound as a blood-pressure remedy and noticed, to their surprise, that everyone they tried it on started sprouting hair like weeds. Behold—Rogaine, the anti-baldness medication. Such tales of serendipity have been told and retold so many times that they have acquired the force of dogma. That's one of the reasons there is such a strong prejudice in the United States against the government's interfering in the commercial innovation process: it's difficult to imagine how flashes of genius could ever be planned, or even predicted, by some bureaucrat in Washington.

But now HDTV comes along, and serendipity and inspiration are nowhere to be found. We asked for HDTV and, after a decade of meetings and grunt work, we got it. Progress wasn't mysterious. It was banal. Is this the way innovation really works?

ABOUT forty minutes south of San Francisco—in Redwood City, the town famous as the birthplace of the VCR—there is a software start-up called NetObjects. The company employs about a hundred people and is expanding so fast that the engineers and designers sit almost on top of each other, squeezed into the second floor of an aging suburban office building. At lunch, the employees gather around aluminum-foil vats of pasta brought in from a caterer and then hurry back to desks covered with computer terminals of every description and surrounded by stacks of empty Federal Express boxes. NetObjects is barely a year and a half old and makes just one product, and yet two weeks ago I.B.M. paid—by some industry estimates—between fifty million and eighty million dollars for a controlling interest in the firm. NetObjects is the quintessential "hot" Silicon Valley software start-up and, since software start-ups are commonly thought to be among the country's most creative companies, is as good a place as any to look at the innovation question.

NetObjects was formed to solve a problem that has bedevilled computer designers from the beginning of the Internet; namely, how best to create "sites" on the World Wide Web. Currently, for example, a company might put pictures and descriptions of its products along with a user manual on its Web site, or a publishing house might put on a list of its titles, or a university a list of courses—all using the Web to create an electronic brochure that anyone on the Internet can easily find and read. Creating an electronic brochure, though, isn't nearly as easy as making a paper brochure. With desktop publishing, you can move a mouse around and click on an endless array of pictures and fonts and colors and designs to create on a computer screen a highly professional-looking document. Web brochures, on the other hand, require the tedious use of a programming language known as HTML (hypertext-markup language), so that until recently to make a Web page you had to learn HTML and laboriously type out the lines of code or else hire a programmer to do it for you. "There was all this pent-up frustration," Samir Arora, the boyish, excitable co-founder of NetObjects, told me. "We heard it over and over again. Web designers would say that the tools they had were too primitive." So NetObjects came up with a piece of software, called Fusion, that takes the place of the programmer. Now you can design a Web site the same way you design a standard brochure on a desktop-publishing system and have Fusion write the HTML for you.

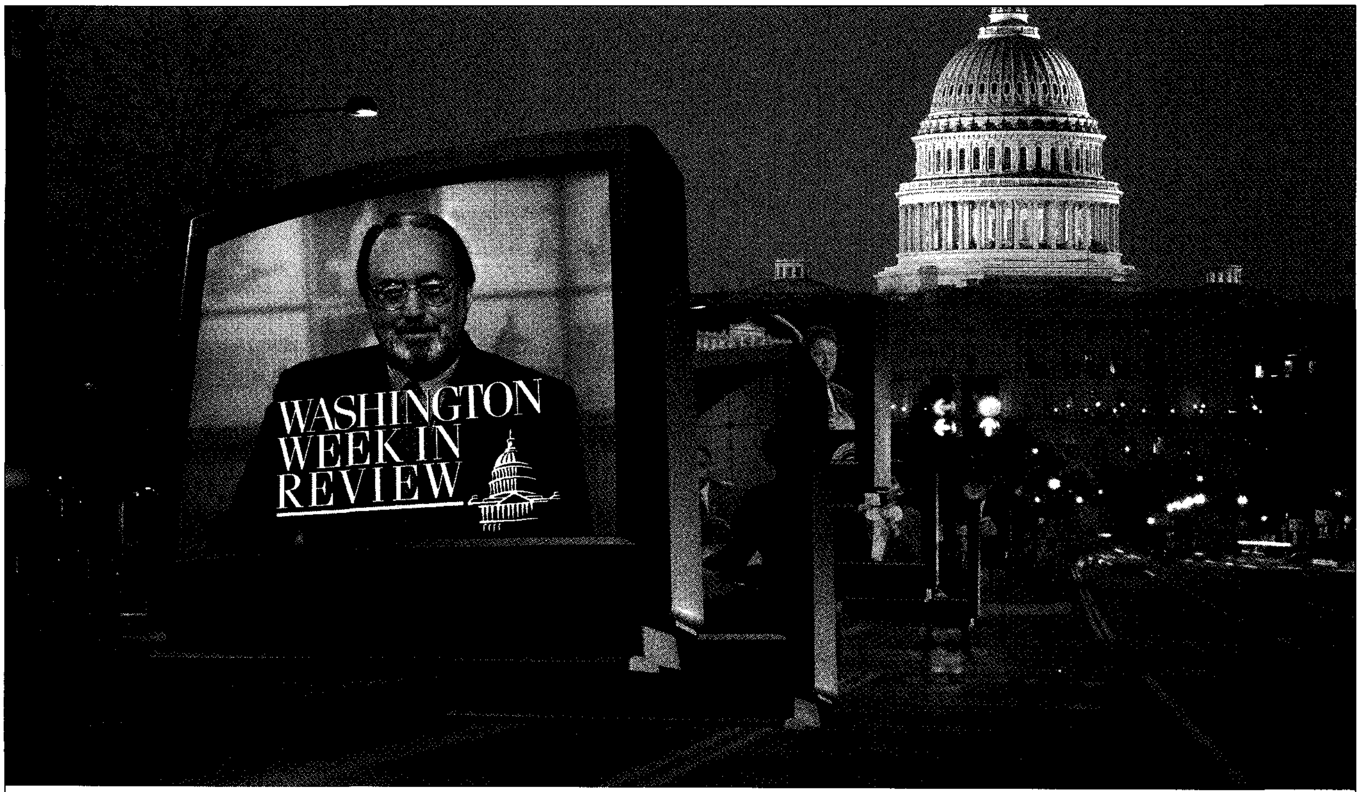
When I visited NetObjects, Victor Zauderer, the company's chief designer, set up a mock Web site for me on his computer in a matter of minutes. He then pulled up the HTML code that Fusion had automatically written for what he had just done: it went on for a page and a half. "Writing that would have taken hours, and you probably wouldn't have got it right the first time," Zauderer told me. "This just took a minute."

How did Fusion come about? The short answer is that in 1994 Arora had a very clever idea about how to automate HTML. That's the typical way we think about innovation—the flash of genius. But there was much more to it than that. With that clever idea in hand, NetObjects was founded and the company began consulting closely with Web designers to find out how they wanted such a tool to work. By last April, the programmers at NetObjects had a prototype—a beta version—and they gave it to about a hundred carefully chosen Web designers for comments; then they tinkered with the software accordingly. On September 9th, they began shipping this first version, Fusion 1.0, to distributors. Over the next few weeks, E-mailed messages started to arrive by the dozen from customers offering more suggestions and complaints. The company sent out "evangelists" to Internet companies and conferences, looking for more feedback. Two months later, in mid-November, the company finished the beta version of Fusion 2.0—the second-generation Fusion—and it, too, was sent to a select group of four hundred customers. Their suggestions and criticism were then incorporated into the final version of Fusion 2.0, which came out in February.

All well-run companies, of course, listen closely to their customers. But if you are making pencils, say, the things your customers tell you, if they care to tell you anything at all, aren't going to be very radical, and, since the product isn't very complicated, most good ideas about pencil innovation can probably be dreamed up by pencilmakers themselves. With high technology, the situation is different. Products are complicated, the pressure to innovate is enormous, and the people who buy and use things like computer equipment often know as much about designing a product—and care as much about how the product works—as the people who developed it. In a 1988 book, "The Sources of Innovation," the M.I.T. researcher Eric Von Hipple found that seventy-seven per cent of the innovations in equipment used to make semiconductors and printed circuit boards and sixty-seven per cent of the breakthroughs reported in four major types of scientific instruments came from customers. With software, these trends are even more dramatic.

The four hundred beta-testers assembled by NetObjects for Fusion 2.0, for example, sent between a hundred and two hundred E-mail messages to the company a day, some of which were highly detailed, and the best were forwarded to the relevant designers and engineers. "I just got two this morning," one programmer, who looked as if his mother still packed his lunch, told me. "Some of them are *gold*."

Samir Arora says that many of the suggestions would never have occurred to staffers on their own, if for no other reason than that many Web designers are using Fusion in ways that were impossible to predict. Just after the release of 1.0, the company learned that people were using Fusion to do what are called Web-casts—creating a live Web site at a concert or a movie première, and constantly updating the site on the Internet with video and audio clips. (Clinton's



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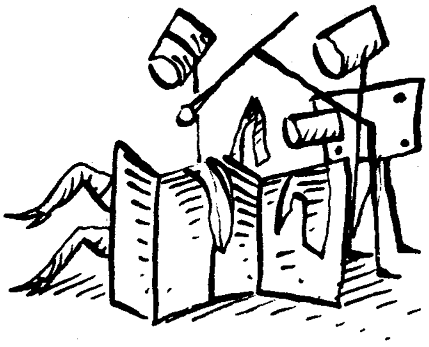
Inauguration, for instance, was Web-cast to Internet users around the world.) "It's becoming a really big industry—it has skyrocketed over the last couple of months," Zauderer told me. "A year ago, doing this kind of thing took ten million dollars' worth of equipment and anywhere from eighty to a hundred people. Today, using our software—and a couple of other companies'—you can do it with a few thousand dollars and four people." There was a problem, though. Every time the site was updated with a new picture or new audio—something that in a Web-cast might happen every fifteen minutes—Fusion would laboriously resend all the data on the Web site. "There might be hundreds of pictures. Really big files. It was taking forever," Zauderer said. When the Web-casters pointed this out, NetObjects revised the code. In the new version, when a site is updated Fusion sends out only the new data. Of the hundred new features in Fusion 2.0, eighty are the direct result of this kind of user suggestion. As technologies become more complicated and users more sophisticated, in other words, customers are no longer the passive recipients of innovation. In many ways, they are the engines of innovation.

This, I think, is the best way to understand how HDTV came about. The F.C.C. didn't invent HDTV, any more than NetObjects' customers invented Fusion. What the agency did, like the Web-site designers, was demand a better product. Also, like NetObjects' customers, the F.C.C. provided valuable guidance during the development process. When some broadcasting companies weren't sure, in the early nineteen-nineties, that they wanted to use a digital process for HDTV, Richard Wiley, who was then the head of the HDTV advisory committee of the F.C.C., nudged them in that direction. Wiley set up and enforced strict deadlines on the contest entrants, to keep them on track. He held out the promise of royalties as a constant incentive. When disputes between some of the companies threatened to derail the whole project, he skillfully smoothed things over. Joel Brinkley refers to Wiley as the father of HDTV, and to the companies that developed the technology as his children. But that's just another way of saying that Wiley was the perfect high-technology customer, peppering his suppliers with E-mail, urging them to work faster, and helpfully pointing out glitches.

Perhaps the best example of the government's customer role is to be found in the origin of the key technology behind HDTV—what's known as digital compression. Today, television signals are broadcast over the airwaves in channels that, by law, can measure no more than six megahertz. Brinkley uses the analogy of a water pipe to explain this: a television channel is like a water pipe six inches in diameter. There is a limit to how much water can flow through it. That's not a problem if, as with today's TV, you are transmitting a TV picture of only five hundred and twenty-five lines. But an HDTV signal has twice as many lines, so it won't fit inside that pipe. Furthermore, the developers of HDTV wanted to make their signal digital. Digital pictures are of much higher quality than analogue ones, but they take up even more space, so that when you add together a digital technology and high-definition technology you have a signal so big that it would take twenty regular television channels—twenty water pipes—to transmit.

The trick to digitizing HDTV was to compress the signal—to funnel it down to the essentials, so that it would fit inside a six-megahertz pipe. Imagine, for example, two consecutive frames of a film of a couple eating lunch in a restaurant. To make HDTV work, you had to find a way to transmit only those parts of the picture which changed from the first frame to the second, so you would send the lips and maybe the arms and hands as they picked up food, and the food itself going from plate to mouth. But you wouldn't transmit the table or the floral centerpiece or the salt and pepper shakers. In the experimental HDTV studio in Washington, there is a camera that continuously transmits everything it sees to the twenty-six-inch monitor on the other side of the room. On a nearby electronic console, there is a digital readout—a gauge that measures how much of the electronic water pipe is in use at any one time. When I stood completely still in front of the camera, the gauge barely moved. Only a mere trickle—the flicker of my eyelids—was being transmitted. But when, at McKinney's urging, I jumped up and down, waving my arms frantically, the gauge soared. The pipe was full.

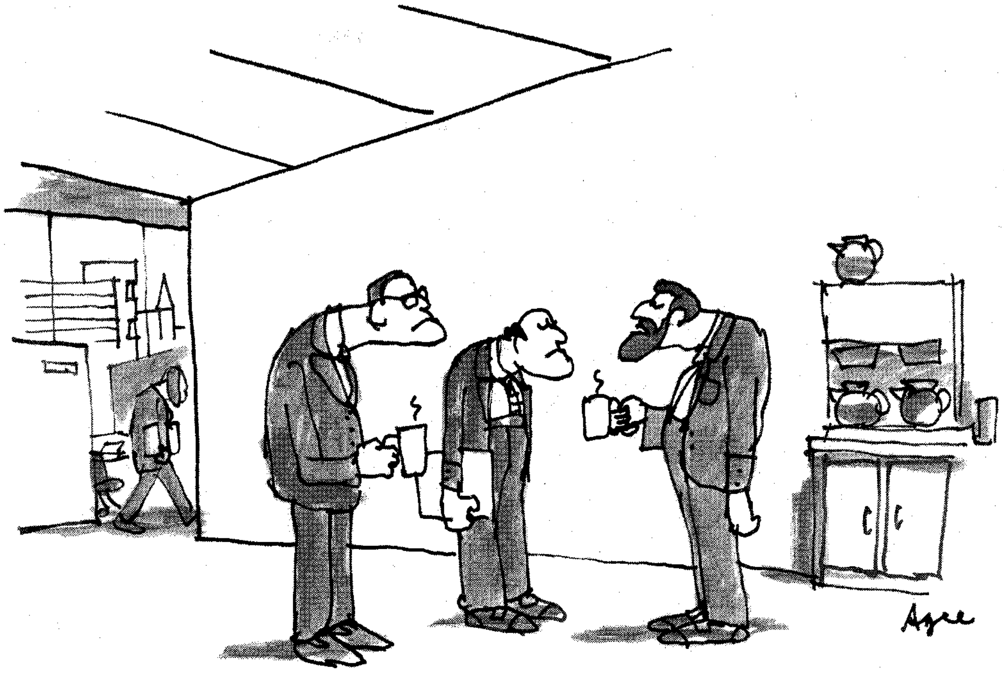


Teaching a computer how to do this compressing took a lot of hard work. But it didn't take any special burst of genius. Digital compression had been done before, in the nineteen-seventies, for NASA's space probes. Applying those same principles to television mostly required months of writing and rewriting computer code. The technological know-how behind HDTV, in short, had been around for years. It had just never occurred to anyone to use it for television. Think of conventional TV as Fusion 1.0 and HDTV as Fusion 2.0. We got the new, improved version because we asked for it.

Of course, most people have always intuitively accepted this role of an activist government in the areas operated and controlled by the state. NASA's job is to oversee the building of better rockets; the National Institutes of Health is supposed to find the cure for AIDS and Alzheimer's and cancer. The development of HDTV, however, carries a different lesson. It's that Washington can also promote innovation in commercial markets—in areas in which government is now assumed to have a sharply limited role—and that Washington can be as smart a customer as anyone else. In fact, not only *can* government be a customer but in some cases it *should* be a customer, since it's often the beta-tester in the best position to ask the tough questions and to make the demands that result in innovation. If the F.C.C. hadn't finally demanded HDTV, the technology would probably still be sitting on a shelf somewhere.

This idea has wide applications to the debates going on now in Congress. Businesses are making a lot of noise about the costs imposed on them by environmental regulations, and few in Washington have seriously challenged the logic behind their complaints. Competitiveness and regulation are assumed to be at odds: it's just that liberals find the costs associated with regulations acceptable and conservatives don't. But if regulations are really the government's way of playing customer, can it be that sometimes those allegedly onerous regulations actually *spur* innovation?

In a 1995 article in the *Harvard Business Review*, the Harvard Business School professor Michael Porter and the Swiss economist Claas van der Linde argue that this is precisely what has happened in the chemical industry. In 1987, for example, a new environmental law forced Dow Chemical to close evaporation ponds that it had used at a California plant to store caustic-soda wastewater needed to process hydrochloric gas. Dow thereupon redesigned its production process, cutting caustic waste by six thousand tons a year and hydrochloric-acid waste by eighty tons, and started reusing the waste stream as raw material in another part of the plant. The total cost of the redesign was a quarter of a million dollars, and the total annual savings were two million four hundred thousand dollars. All told, Porter and van der Linde looked at the antipollution efforts at twenty-nine chemical plants. Of a hundred and eighty-one waste-prevention activities, just one resulted in a cost increase. Most required little or no capital outlay. The average effect on product yield, where such information was available, was a seven-per-cent *increase.* For every dollar the plants spent complying with the waste-reduction regulations—regulations that chemical-industry lobbyists fought bitterly—they saved three dollars and forty-nine cents.



"You fellers seen 'Sling Blade,' I reckon."

• •

A conservative economist would say that what this really proves is that environmental regulation is unnecessary, since firms will eventually pursue cost-saving efficiencies on their own. But then why hadn't they done it? Porter and van der Linde write, "The belief that companies will pick up on profitable opportunities without a regulatory push makes a false assumption about competitive reality—namely, that all profitable opportunities for innovation have already been discovered, that all managers have perfect information about them, and that organizational incentives are aligned with innovating. In fact, in the real world, managers often have highly incomplete information and limited time and attention." The writers are not saying that the free market doesn't work, that we can't get innovation without some kind of central-government planning. Rather, they are making a subtler and more interesting point—that regulators are part of the free-market process, that they are part of the way in which managers with highly incomplete information get more complete information. Chemical-plant managers are no different from digital-compression experts or the engineers at NetObjects.

This doesn't mean, obviously, that government should have license to barge in anywhere it wishes. Porter and van der Linde are very careful to distinguish between what they call good regulations and bad regulations: setting strict standards is good, but mandating specific technologies is bad. By the same token, giving companies the time and freedom to experiment with preventing pollution is better than forcing them to buy expensive "end of pipe" cleanup systems. HDTV worked because the F.C.C. simply asked for better television. It didn't attempt to predict what that better television would be. So long as regulators are smart, they can play a key role in promoting technological change.

LAST fall, General Motors introduced the world's first mass-produced electric car, the EV-1. The car has some drawbacks—cost and range among them. (It's 1.0, not 2.0.) Technologically, however, it's a marvel. The batteries carry the equivalent of just half a gallon of gas, but since electric motors are three or four times more efficient than the standard internal-combustion engine, that's sufficient to take the car almost eighty miles. Conventional cars accelerate jerkily with the grinding of gears. But the EV-1 doesn't have gears, so it takes off like a jet, in one smooth, astonishingly fast motion, with the only noise the faint high whirr of the electric motor.

The State of California has decreed that by the year 2003 ten per cent of all cars sold within its borders will be as completely emission-free as the EV-1, and, predictably, the mandate has caused all manner of hand-wringing in the automobile industry. But when I recently test-drove the EV-1 in Los Angeles—flying silently down the smoggy Santa Ana Freeway, everyone but me noisily pumping out exhaust—all I could think was how modest a goal that was. Why be so timid? Twenty per cent, anyone? Twenty-five? ♦

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Julia Maynard
Former Accord Owner

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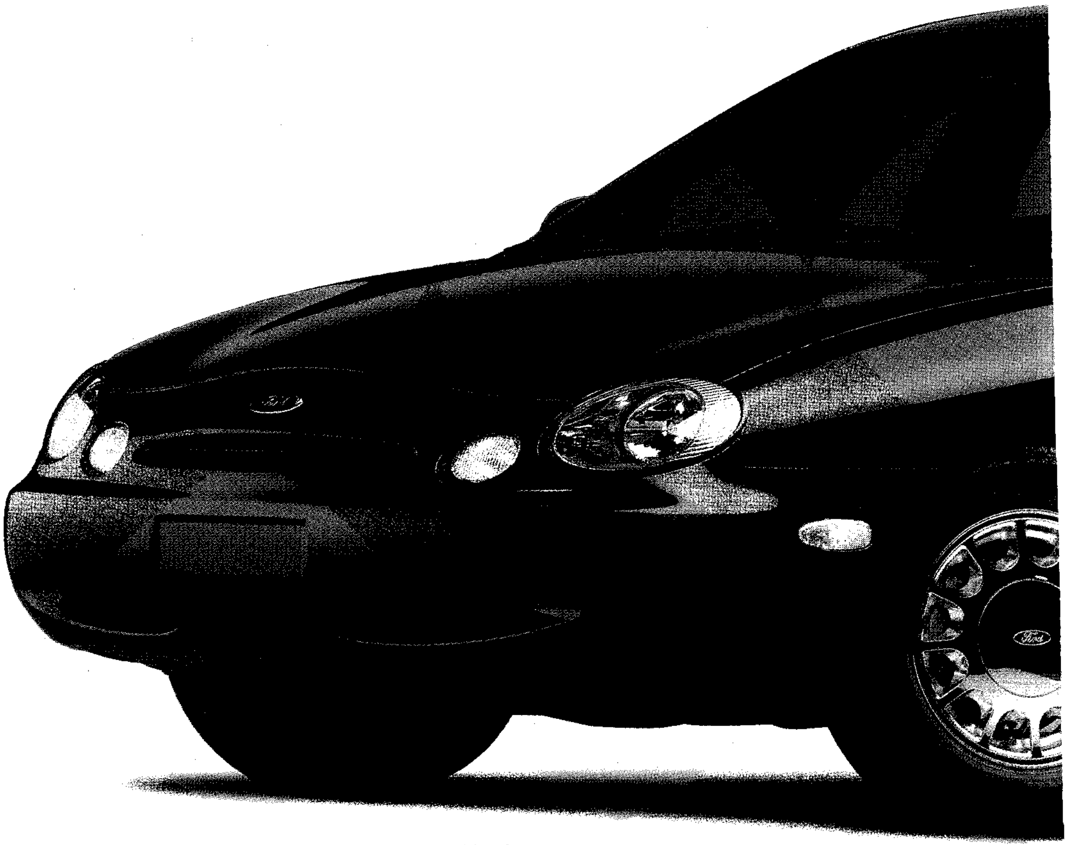

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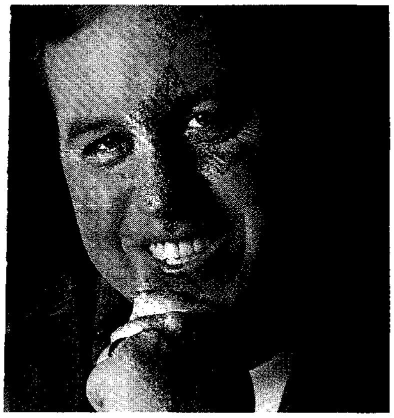

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THE SILENCE

John Paul II has forged a new relationship between Catholics and Jews. He also upholds papal infallibility. To do so he must maintain the silence surrounding the Church and the Holocaust. Will that be his tragedy?

BY JAMES CARROLL

I—THE ANNIVERSARY MASS

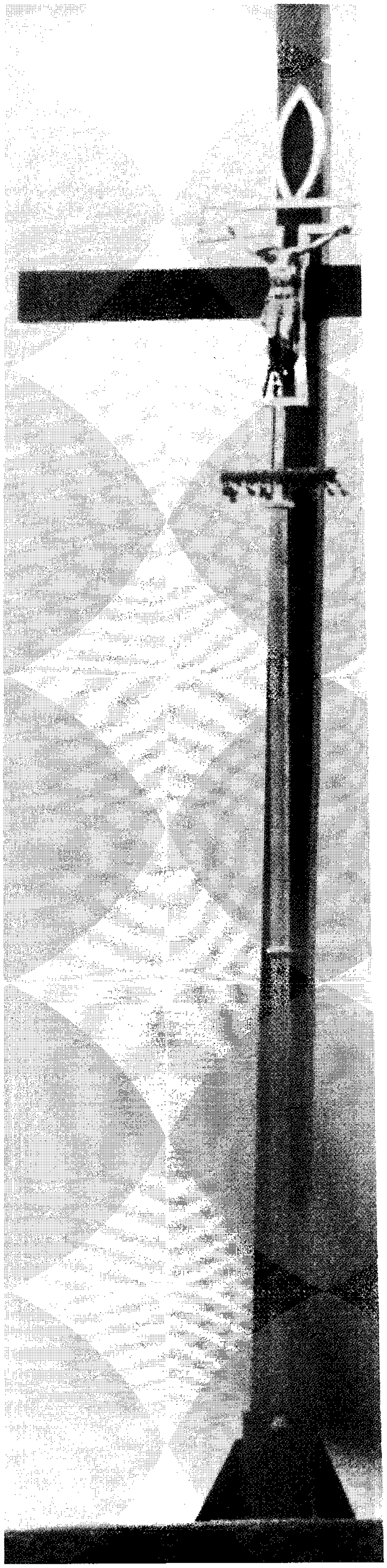
DURING the Second World War, young Karol Wojtyla risked his life to study for the priesthood in Kraków, a city terrorized by the Nazis. His reward, after his ordination, was to go to Rome for graduate work in theology; and it was in Rome, late last fall, that I began a journey that would take me back along the path of the man who, as Pope John Paul II, holds an unparalleled position of moral leadership in the world. John Paul II is now seventy-six and in poor health. Although his role in the demise of the Soviet Empire has been emphasized of late, the end of his story will take its truest meaning from its beginning, in the time of the war with Hitler's Germany.

I was in Rome to attend the Papal Mass celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of Wojtyla's ordination to the priesthood, so thoughts of him as a young man came naturally. From 1946 until 1948, he attended the Dominican theological school, the Angelicum, only three blocks from the Palazzo di Venezia, where I stood one chilly November evening. Also nearby was another, more liberal theological center, the Gregorian Institute, which is run by Jesuits, known for their spirit of independence. I was curious to know what one of its theologians—a longtime Vatican observer, an Australian named Gerald O'Collins—thought of His Holiness at this milestone. I knew of Father O'Collins because, years before, he'd done a stint at the Jesuit theological school near Harvard while I, a Catholic priest at the time, was chaplain at Boston University, across the river. When I telephoned him in Rome, he agreed to meet me. "I'll be the one wearing the red scarf," he said, proposing a rendezvous under the balcony of the Palazzo di Venezia, made famous by Mussolini. Even though the mammoth crenellated building and its vast square to which Fascists thronged are identified with Il Duce, the palace once served as the dwelling of Popes. But then so did many places in Rome.

Father O'Collins arrived, in his red scarf—an epiphany of friendly exuberance. He led me to a small neighborhood restaurant, L'Abruzzi, and its diminutive owner greeted the large Irish-Australian like a brother. We settled in for an elaborate multicourse dinner. The third time I called him "Father," the priest slapped my shoulder. "Gerry! Call me Gerry!" I liked him at once.

When the conversation turned to His Holiness, Gerry slapped the table, a show of pure enthusiasm that, frankly, surprised me. "The things this Pope has done! The first Bishop of Rome ever to enter the Jewish synagogue! That was an astonishing thing here." The Pope's visit occurred in 1986, launching a new chapter in the relationship between Catholics and Jews. No doubt driven in some way by his own experience as a young man living near Auschwitz, he has regularly denounced anti-Semitism and lamented the Holocaust. In 1993, he established diplomatic relations with the State of Israel, and in 1994 he sponsored at the Vatican the remarkable Gilbert Levine concert commemorating the Shoah.

"And then," O'Collins continued, "on one of his early trips to Africa—his speaking to twenty or thirty thousand young Muslims! What Pope has ever done such a thing?" What Pope has given thousands of speeches all over the globe, written worldwide best-sellers, sparked democratic uprisings, challenged the Mafia, dominated the media as a pop icon, redefined the politi-



John Paul II in the vestmen

JULIAN CALDER/CAMERA PRESS/RETNA LTD.

Bishop of Rome, on the first papal visit to Ireland, in 1979. His papacy has marked "the coming of the world Church."

cal uses of moral authority—or survived a bullet? "And after the assassination attempt—the way he came back! What integrity and courage! I give him a lot of credit. . . . The guy should have been killed and then, the next thing, he's coming down the street at high noon."

O'Collins was measuring the era of John Paul II by the standard of something larger than the liberal-conservative argument within the Church. Since Wojtyla stepped into the Shoes of the Fisherman, in 1978, his papacy has marked "the coming of the world Church," as O'Collins put it. "We have a hundred and thirty nations represented here at the Gregorian," he went on. "In Africa, there are something like ninety million Catholics, from being about two million at the beginning of the century. And think"—he leaned across the pasta, gesturing with his tumbler of wine—"think of the astonishing survival of the Church in Central and Eastern Europe! Just yesterday—the story of the Albanian Jesuit."

O'Collins was the first of my Roman hosts to refer to this, but several others would do so as well. An emotional encounter had occurred the day before between Father Anton Luli, an eighty-six-year-old Jesuit priest, and the Pontiff, and reports of it were passed along as an instance of why so many found His Holiness irresistible. As his anniversary had approached, John Paul had invited any Catholic priest in the world who was also marking fifty years since ordination to come to Rome to celebrate with him. More than sixteen hundred such priests had accepted, and this week they had been meeting at the Vatican in a series of seminars and services, which would culminate at a gala Mass at St. Peter's on Sunday. The evening before my dinner with O'Collins, at a Vespers service in the papal-audience hall, Father Luli had been singled out to speak for the assemblage of aged priests. He was chosen because he had spent much of his priesthood in Communist prisons and labor camps in Albania. He had been released only in 1989, as the Iron Curtain fell. The ordeal had taken its toll, and Father Luli was frail. After his testimony, he made his way carefully back toward his chair, and only then noticed that His Holiness, still on the platform, had come to his feet. The Pope was waiting for the Albanian to approach.

DISCIPLINE

I am old and I have had
more than my share of good and bad:
I've had love and sorrow, seen sudden death,
been left alone, of love bereft.
I thought I'd never love again
and felt my life was grief and pain.
Twixt life and death the edge was thin,
then I discovered discipline:
I learned to take the good and bad
and smile whenever I felt sad.
I learned to care a great deal more
for the world about me than before,
began to forget both "me" and "I"
and joined in life as it rolled by.
This may not mean sheer ecstasy
but it's better far than "I" and "me."

—Brooke Astor

An American who had witnessed the scene described it to me: "This old Jesuit goes back up to the Pope, who is waiting for him with his arms open. But then the Pope closes his arms to clasp his hands, which he does because his left hand shakes so badly. The old Jesuit can hardly walk, but when he gets to the Pope, he starts to go down on his knees, to kiss the Pope's ring. But the Pope grabs him by the shoulders, and starts to haul him back up. No way is John Paul going to let this priest kneel to him—not after what he's been through. That's the feeling. So there you are: this struggle of these two old guys, these two old lions—the Jesuit determined to kneel, and the Pope determined not to let him. Well, forty-two years in Communist jails hadn't broken that priest, and he made it down to his knees, but not for long. He goes for the ring, but right away the Pope hauls him up again. Just lifts the guy, like a longshoreman, and then throws his arms around him, and really hugs him. I mean, I don't think there was a dry eye in the place."

"Imagine," O'Collins said, finishing his version of the same story. "So many years in solitary, and then to be embraced by the Pope in the Vatican!" He began to laugh with pleasure. Disputes between Church liberals and conservatives had simply dropped away. "It was quite a nice thing," O'Collins added. "Locked away in a closet all those years, and then—" His laugh took over once more, a chortle now.

The American who witnessed the Pope's meeting with the Albanian Jesuit was the United States Ambassador to the Vatican, Raymond L. Flynn. I knew Flynn when he was the mayor of Boston, where he served for almost a decade, beginning in 1984. He had started as an anti-busing leader in the seventies but ended as a figure of racial healing; in his last election, in 1991, he carried every precinct in every ward. Flynn had never stopped being a neighborhood guy, known for simplicity, yet there he was that Sunday morning, standing by his limousine in white tie and tails. The limo was a long black Cadillac, still the all-American automobile, and not a car suited for the narrow streets of Rome. The American flag fluttered in front of us, torn by the wind as we careered behind a pair of escorting green-and-white Polizia cars, and my mind went back to another American limousine in Rome, and the one other time I was off to see the Pope. In 1960, my father's status as an Air Force general led to our family's being granted a private audience with Pope John XXIII. I was a high-school senior, aiming to be a flyboy, but the encounter with the beloved Angelo Roncalli took me into the priesthood and sealed my identity as a iberal Catholic. I remembered Dad's chauffeur barrelling through these very streets, our car sweeping into the colonnaded magnificence of St. Peter's Square. But now, as the Ambassador's limo took a last, downhill curve, the *cupolone* itself appeared—huge, breathtaking, right outside the windshield. The dome of St. Peter's dominated not just the place but time itself.

Then, just as quickly, the *cupolone* disappeared as we darted up a narrow lane, close by the south wall of Vatican City. We swung into a cobblestoned square. In short order, the car doors were opened, and we were out, lost in a crowd of costumes—the purple-sashed soutanes of bishops, the red birettas of cardinals, the white surplices of acolytes, the white ties of diplomats stepping from Mercedes limousines ahead of their ladies, whose gowns seemed more suited to the casino at midnight than to this church in the morning.

We were led through a shadowy foyer, then entered the open space of the church proper, and the first thing that hit me was how startlingly bright the air was. My ears popped, as if the air pressure had changed. My eyes flew to the dome above, expecting clouds. But instead: "Tv Es Petrvs"—the huge Roman letters (that V instead of U) ringing the base of the hemispherical vault seemed to be falling toward me—"Et Svper Hanc Petram Aedificabo Ecclesiam Meam." Flynn was shown to his chair in the third row of the section reserved for the diplomatic corps, on the stage-right side of the sanctuary, close to the altar. Across a set of ropes to his right was a large section of empty chairs which curved in front of the altar—hundreds of vacant chairs, perhaps thousands. Spilling down the nave were yet more roped-off chairs, and in the far distance, just visible from my angle, was a crush of people. A vibrating hum of anticipation woofed off the marble.

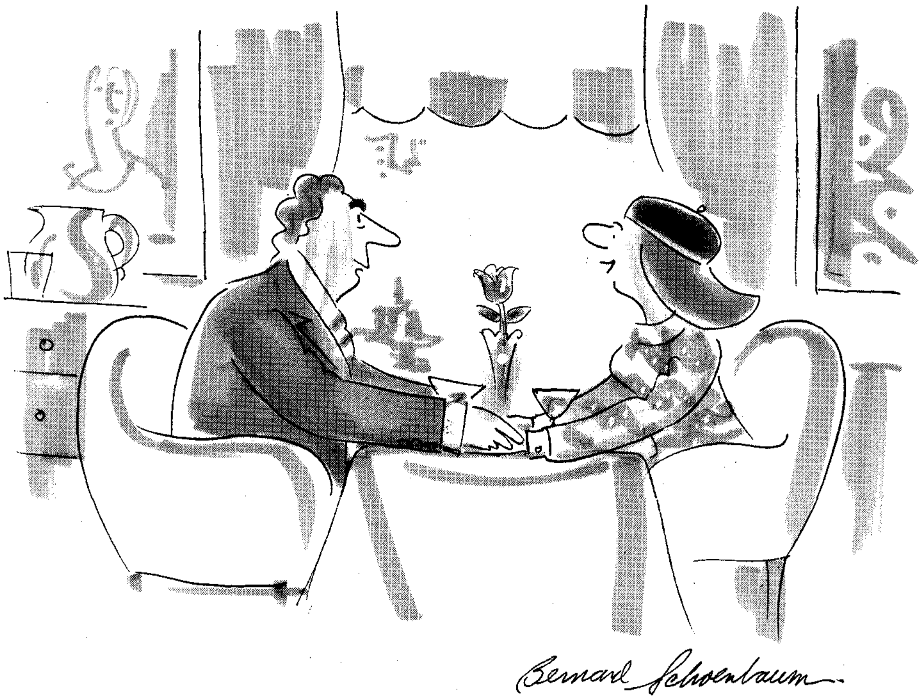
I was shown to a chair perhaps a dozen rows behind Flynn. An elegant French couple were seated to my left, and a young aristocrat was just in front. He kept flipping his long, well-groomed hair. This was the socializing moment of arrival: cheeks were offered left, right, and left again. I saw cardinals kissing each other's rings—among them Boston's Bernard Law and New York's John O'Connor. Pantalooned Swiss Guards paraded past in helmets and red plumes, the razor edges of their pike blades flashing.

On each chair was a booklet: "50° di Ordinazione Sacerdotale del Santo Padre Giovanni Paolo II." Above those words was the wounded face of Christ. A boys' choir began to sing near the altar, just behind the great Bernini baldachin, with its twisted black columns—Mark Twain had called it "a considerably magnified bedstead, nothing more." But Twain had gone on to remark that the baldachin was more than half as high as Niagara Falls. In the vast space, a new humming sound began to gather, growing in volume. It was applause, coming from the rear of the basilica.

The choir by now was singing "Christus vincit! Christus regnat! Christus imperat!" A long snake of white-robed clergy wound forward, then twisted into the adjacent section of chairs. These were the Pope's concelebrants, the sixteen hundred anniversary priests, accompanied by a hundred and sixteen cardinals and fifty-six bishops and archbishops, arraying themselves in a semicircle in front of the altar. As they filed slowly into their places—Africans, Asians, Indians, and Greek Uniates, as well as Europeans and North and South Americans—they seemed a procession of the Church itself, proof of the astonishing accomplishment of John Paul II, how quickly he'd solidified this new, universal image of the oldest institution on the planet. The things this Pope has done! A billion souls strong, the Catholic Church flies the flag of a world ideology, the only one left. No wonder the applause.

At the end of the procession, behind the mitred heads of bishops, archbishops, and cardinals, His Holiness came into view. He was moving slowly, placing his staff a pace ahead, then stepping to it. A sheriff at high noon? He looked wounded. But as he came fully into view the applause drowned out the music. Surely the love flowing toward the Pope included an element of relief that in recent weeks he had survived not just the removal of an inflamed appendix but rumors that had swept the world—a tumor, cancer, death's door. He carefully mounted the sanctuary stairs, circled the altar, then bent and kissed it—an act of veneration that goes back to the catacombs below, when Masses were said on the tombs of the first Christian martyrs. When John Paul looked up, exertion showed in his face, and pain.

As a Pole, Karol Wojtyla had been reared to think of his own martyred people as the Christ Among Nations, whose suffering would redeem the world. Now the unpopularity of his positions and, in addition, his physical infirmities



"Is this a real proposal, or are you off your medication?"

have given the Pope himself a sort of martyrdom. But by putting his suffering on display he has transformed it into a source of power. In the thunder of the basilica greeting there were echoes of the choir: "*Vincit! Regnat! Imperat!*" But who conquers? Who rules? Who commands? The sustained acclamation was followed by the Mass said in nine languages, with nearly two thousand priests lifting their consecrating fingers toward the wafer held high in John Paul's visibly trembling hands.

Fifty years ago, young Wojtyla had begun the journey that brought him here. Could it be retraced? This pinnacle moment, in which his personality and his personal history seemed entirely merged with those of the Church itself, implied something more—something transcendent. "*Vincit! Regnat! Imperat!*" The liturgy, in this setting, was a display—the ecclesiastical word is "monstrance"—of the Supreme Pontiff, embodying in himself an absolute authority unlike that asserted by any other living human being, an authority that is said to be infallible. Yet how was that authority exercised, and how had it served the things of God and man in this half century? The Pope's fiftieth-anniversary Mass, in all its classical grandeur, Renaissance splendor, and modern diversity, seemed finally a celebration of his claim to infallibility.

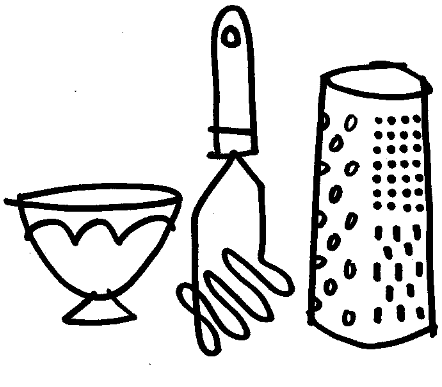
In assessing John Paul II's importance, Father O'Collins had instinctively pointed first to the visit to the Roman synagogue. Why does this Pope's relationship with Jews have such power if not because of the notorious events that helped shape the young Polish priest? What do Vatican responses to those events say about a Pope's infallibility? The fiftieth anniversary of his ordination suggested exactly the right set of brackets within which to ask such questions: the two potent images of Karol Wojtyla and Joannes Paulus II P.P. How does the story of the transformation of the one into the other illuminate the story of a Church in crisis, and of a bloody century?

II—THE POPE'S NEMESIS

CROSSING the Tiber, I entered the ancient ghetto, which is still marked by the Hebrew letters of shopkeepers' signs. A block from the river, I came to the towering synagogue. A high iron-spiked fence surrounds the building, which evokes the sensuous Moorish style instead of the stricter lines of classical Rome or the Renaissance. A dome rises majestically from the squared-off building, a worthy if modest counterpoint to the *cupolone.* Jews were living in Rome before there were Christians.

When John Paul II came to this place, in 1986, he forthrightly condemned anti-Semitism "by anyone," and, in particular, expressed his "abhorrence for the genocide decreed against the Jewish people during the last war," adding, "The Jewish community of Rome, too, paid a high price in blood." Surely his listeners that day were amazed at the Pope's direct reference to what is, after all, the event that most clearly indicts his predecessor Pius XII. The Germans occupied Rome in September, 1943. Until then, Jews had been relatively safe, but at 5:30 A.M. on October 16th gunshots rang out over the ghetto, home at the time to four thousand Jews. The streets leading out of the quarter were blocked. S.S. officers drove residents from their homes and in a few hours arrested more than twelve hundred people. The Jews were taken to a temporary jail—the Italian Military College, which stood only two hundred yards from Vatican City. Yet from the Vatican no voice was raised in public support of the Jews.

Two days later, the prisoners were put into trucks, taken to the railroad station, and loaded into boxcars. Again, no voice was raised in protest. The arrested Jews were gone. Five days later, this entry appears in the meticulously kept log at Auschwitz: "Transport, Jews from Rome. After the selection 149 men registered with numbers 158451–158639 and 47 women registered with numbers 66172–66218 have been admitted to the detention camp. The rest have been gassed."



This event was central to Rolf Hochhuth's 1963 play "The Deputy," whicl quotes the German ambassador as saying that "the incident took place, as i were, under the Pope's window.' "

Hochhuth's play asserted that sinc the Pope, Christ's Vicar on Earth, Hi "deputy," would say nothing even as roundup took place at the foot of Vatican Hill, Hitler could reasonably coun on Church silence everywhere. The Pope' silence meant, immediately, that Jews elsewhere in Italy had less warning; ir subsequent weeks, the Nazis arrestec many of the Jews in other Italian cities. About eight thousand died in the death camps—more than fifteen per cent of the Jews living in Italy. In a possibly apocryphal story that Hannah Arendt recounts in her essay "A Christian in St. Peter's Chair," not long before his death Pope John XXIII, Pius XII's successor, read "The Deputy." "He was asked what one could do against it," Arendt writes. "Whereupon he allegedly replied: 'Do against it? What can you do against the truth?' "

On his visit to the synagogue, John Paul II recalled the 1943 fate of Roman Jews, but he made no reference to the Vatican's silence. After Hochhuth's play, the Vatican had released documents showing that many thousands of Jews had been rescued by various officials of the Catholic Church, but such heroes were almost always members of the lower clergy or were stationed outside of Rome. John Paul II, having refrained from mentioning Pius XII, went on immediately to praise the Roman priests, monks, and nuns who in 1943 "offered refuge and safety to so many Jews of Rome," opening their convents, seminaries, and the buildings "of Vatican City itself." The Pope had dared to mention the modern Church's greatest ignominy but had then taken comfort in the noble memory of the exceptions.

In response, the president of the Jewish Community of Rome, Giacomo Saban, acknowledged the truth of much of what the Pope said. Nevertheless, he included in his reply this pointed rebuke: "What was taking place on one of the banks of the Tiber could not have been unknown on the other side of the river, nor could what was happening elsewhere on the European continent." A Pope had been silent once again—this time about the silence of a Pope.

At the synagogue, remembering this, I was aware that I had just seen at St. Peter's Basilica a vivid, if implicit, acclamation of the Pope's infallibility. Here was my thought as I walked through the narrow streets of the old ghetto: While it is certainly true that Pius XII's silence during the Second World War did not raise any questions of doctrinal infallibility, it brought to the fore the question of any Pope's human fallibility—and doubts about his judgment. Has the Church, I wondered, come to terms with this question, and what were the implications of its failure to do so? I carried the question one step further: Was it possible that the late-twentieth-century crisis of Church authority had its roots in the Holocaust?

"According to this analysis, Gibbons, last year your department spent forty-five thousand dollars on candy alone."

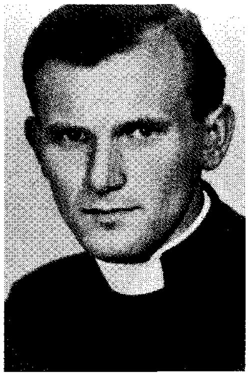
On the day after the Pope's anniversary Mass and my visit to the ghetto, I attended a Vatican press briefing on Church plans for the millennium, which in Vatican parlance is to be known as Jubilaeum A.D. 2000. The austere, hawk-nosed Roger Cardinal Etchegaray, the official in charge of the Church's observances, unveiled the jubilee logo—a cross in the colors of the rainbow superimposed on a sky-blue globe; interlocking doves represented the continents. His Holiness had declared in 1994 that the Church "cannot cross the threshold of the new millennium without encouraging her children to purify themselves, through repentance, of past errors and instances of infidelity, inconsistency, and slowness to act." But even when the Pope acknowledged the "acquiescence . . . concerning the violation of fundamental human rights by totalitarian regimes," he laid responsibility on "many Christians," rather than indicting the Church itself. At the Vatican briefing, no mention was made of this moral reckoning.

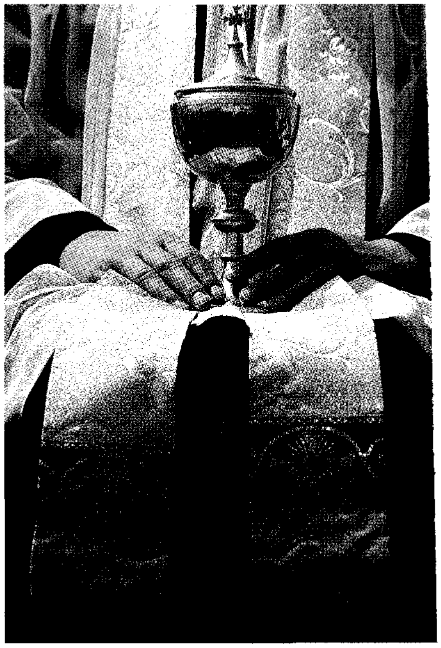
In the matter of the Holocaust, the Church's acquiescence is not the only issue. "There will be the Jewish problem as long as the Jews remain." This was a solemn statement made in a pastoral letter of 1936 by the Roman Catholic Primate of Poland, August Cardinal Hlond, and the letter continued, "It is a fact that the Jews are fighting against the Catholic Church, persisting in free thinking, and are the vanguard of godlessness, Bolshevism, and subversion. . . . It is a fact that the Jews deceive, levy interest, and are pimps. It is a fact that the religious and ethical influence of the Jewish young people on Polish young people is a negative one." Hlond's letter was careful to say that these "facts" did not justify the murder of Jews, but it is hard to see how such anti-Semitism on the part of the leading Catholic in Poland was unconnected with what followed. Over the decades and centuries of this millennium such sentiments expressed by Christian leaders were not unusual.

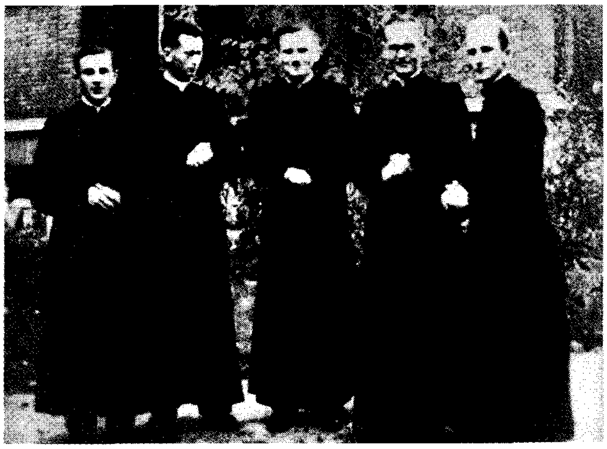
"We desire to combat the enemies of God in the East." The chronicler Guibert of Nogent attributes this statement to the Crusaders setting forth from Rouen in 1096. The document continues: "But we have under our eyes the Jews, a race more inimical to God than all the others. We are doing this whole thing backward." The Jews of Rouen were thus offered baptism. Those who refused it were killed. During the Holocaust, one out of every three Jews was murdered, but for other periods in this millennium the figure may be nearly as high. "God wills it!" Pope Urban II said, launching the First Crusade. In exactly the same words almost nine hundred years later, at Christmas in 1942, Pius XII pleaded for peace, but he mentioned the unfolding Nazi atrocities, of which he knew as much as anyone outside the occupied German zones, only obliquely.

"THE great ship of the Catholic Church which set sail into the future with strength and hope during the Council of Pope John XXIII has gone off course." These words appeared in the widely read Italian newspaper the *Corriere della Sera* only days before the Pope's anniversary. Their author was the papal nemesis Hans Küng.

After decades as a Roman Catholic priest and theologian, Küng, a Swiss in-







The transformation, from left: Karol Wojtyla as a schoolboy (second row, second from right); as a seminarian (center), during the Nazi occupation of Kraków; as a deacon, in 1946; as Joannes Paulus II, in 1980.

tellectual, had undertaken a huge and broadly ecumenical study of world religions. It is significant that his volume on Christianity was preceded by one on Judaism. In his introduction to "Judaism," published in 1991, he wrote, "The foundations for this were laid for me during the difficult 1930s and 1940s in Germany." Küng was a teen-ager studying "with Jewish fellow-pupils at the Gymnasium" in Lucerne when the Jews of Rome were taken away. His subsequent career, like the careers of his generation of European Christian scholars, took its shape from the events of that time, although—again, like many others—it would be years before he addressed them directly.

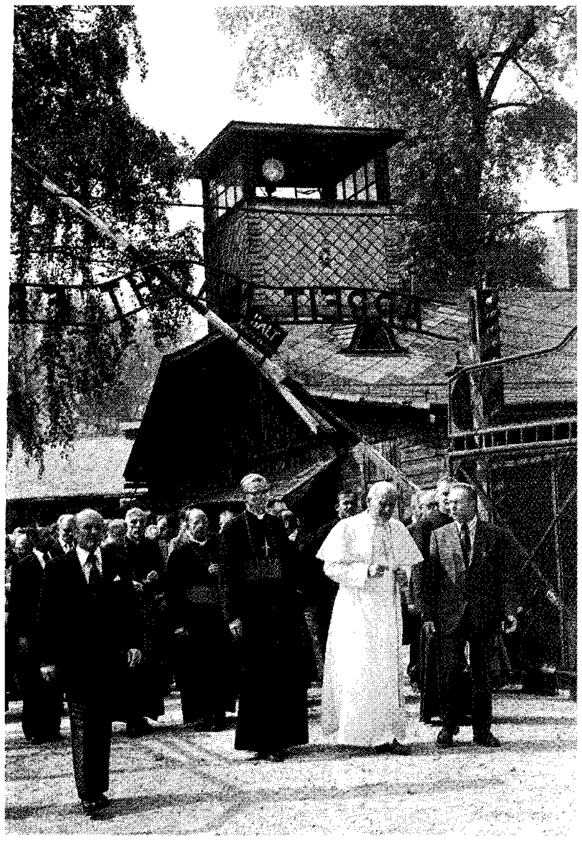
Küng had become famous as a critic of the Papacy, and the article he published in the *Corriere della Sera*, and the interview that accompanied it, was described by another newspaper as "a devastating blow" to the Vatican. Even while preparing to celebrate the Pope's anniversary, Romans and Vatican officials had read Küng's article, which was entitled "Ten Theses on the Future of the Papacy"—"theses," as in Martin Luther.

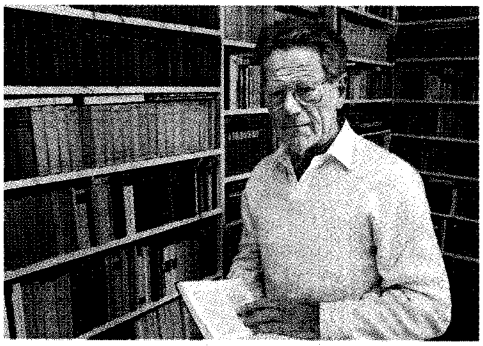
But Küng is a Luther who is still in the Church. His license to teach Roman Catholic theology was withdrawn by John Paul II in 1979, because of Küng's challenge to the Pope's authority, notably in the 1970 book "Infallible? An Enquiry." Now, in his "Theses," Küng reiterated his complaint against the "despotic" Pope. "Longing for the homeland, the captain wishes to forcibly take the ship back to the harbor of medieval Catholic pseudo-security," Küng wrote. "The Church is neither a warship, where a military drill holds sway, nor a galley where a single individual beats time for all with a hammer. . . . Someone must dare to look the captain in the face and, when they know better, to contradict him. The highest authority . . . is not the captain, but the Lord, the owner of the ship."

In 1970, Küng had attacked "the Roman system, which is still characterized by . . . a formal and often inhuman juridicism, a terrifying spiritual absolutism." He has been arguing ever since that "the Galileo case of the present day [is] the question of the personal meaning of marriage," and, by extension, all the questions arising from sexuality—abortion, contraception, divorce, homosexuality, celibacy, women priests.

From one point of view, these are issues merely of Church discipline, but the absolute authority with which such teachings are pronounced points to something deeper: a question of fundamental Catholic belief. Does the claim to infallibility suggest a Church unwilling to accept itself as a human institution—unwilling, that is, to accept the human condition of those who make up the Church, whether they are haggard parents with too many children or celibates required to live alone? And what about the way the Church treats those who dissent from its teachings? That brings us to Küng's great question in "Judaism": Does this absolutism relate to the Church's troubled history with Jews? It was not a connection he made in the *Corriere della Sera* article, but it lurked sea-monster-like below the surface.

I HAD first laid eyes on Hans Küng at a lecture he gave in Washington, D.C., in 1963. I was a black-robed seminarian at the time, and what struck me most about the young Swiss priest was that he wore a gray suit and a necktie, in violation of the rubrics of clerical dress. As a chief proponent of Pope John XXIII's *aggiornamento*, Küng sparked my religious transformation. His book "The Council, Reform & Re-





The controversy, from left: John Paul II at Auschwitz, "the Golgotha of the contemporary world," in 1979; Hans Küng, a Luther who is still in the Church; a procession of cardinals on Easter at St. Peter's.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: SYGMA; DOROTHEA SCHMID/BILDERBERG;

union" had made him famous as an advocate of the liberal reforms that the Second Vatican Council was even then beginning to embrace.

The next time I saw Küng was the day after I left Rome, last November. I travelled to his house, in Tübingen, a half hour southwest of Stuttgart, in the foothills of the Swabian Jura. Tübingen has been Küng's home since 1960; his house sits on a hill above a river valley, with a view of turreted rooftops and towers and, in the distance, the mountains. In contrast to this open view, the entrance to Küng's house is hidden by a screen of juniper trees and arborvitae, as if for anonymity.

I was greeted by Küng's assistant, a well-tailored fiftyish woman, who showed me efficiently up to his study. The most striking feature of the room was a large window framing the mountain vista. Books lined the other walls. One set of shelves held many dozens of volumes, including one copy each of the translations of Küng's more than fifty books.

The theologian came forward with an easy smile and an outstretched hand. I knew his face well. It was no longer youthful—he is sixty-nine—but he was more handsome in person than I'd remembered. He still had a great shock of hair, but it was now as gray as it was blond. He wore stylish glasses, a blue Lacoste shirt, a trim tan cardigan. After greeting me, he indicated a table near the window. As I sat down, Küng disappeared into a far corner, then returned with a half-bottle of champagne and two glasses. "To welcome you," he said. His English was precise, but his voice was warm. Any impulse I'd had to see him as the firebrand Luther—theses!—evaporated. We toasted each other, then he said, "Let's get right to work."

"Infallibility," I said.

"And the ordination of women," he replied at once.

"I declare," His Holiness wrote in his 1994 Letter on the Ordination of Priests, "that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church's faithful." (In 1995, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith defined this rejection as "irrevocable . . . infallible," requiring the "definitive assent of all Catholics.") Küng delights in the "wriggling" of Catholic theologians who know that the ruling will not stand the test of time. They wriggle, he argues, because they recognize that by draping it in the mantle of infallibility the Pope and his Curia—a word thought to come from the Latin *co-* plus *vir*, meaning "men together"—have put their chips on the wrong number.

Papal infallibility, exercised by the Pope when he speaks ex cathedra on matters of faith and morals, was defined as doctrine only in 1870, when the bishops at the First Vatican Council sought to bolster a Pope who had just been stripped of temporal sovereignty over the Papal States. The Church's own claim to infallible teaching authority, however, predates Vatican I, and is not limited by the rubrics set out in the 1870 definition. It can also rest on the consensus, across time, of Church teaching. Now Küng explained, " 'It is because,' they say, 'the bishops and Popes through all the centuries agreed as a matter of faith that women cannot be ordained. Therefore—' That is Ratzinger's logic."

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, a German, is John Paul II's chief doctrinal adviser, a kind of theological Kissinger. In January of this year, for example, it was Ratzinger who signed an edict excommunicating a seventy-two-year-old Sri Lankan theologian, Tissa Balasuriya, who had applied principles of liberation theology to Asia. Balasuriya is a former university rector and one of the leading Catholic theologians in Asia. His ouster, the first of a Catholic theologian in a number of years, is a signal from the Vatican that it is playing for keeps. Yet Ratzinger has not dared excommunicate Küng. Ironically, the two were colleagues. As dean of the theology faculty at the University of Tübingen, Küng hired Ratzinger in the early nineteen-sixties. It is probably no accident that the Vatican moved against Küng just as Ratzinger rose to power.

"They all told me, 'If you keep quiet, you can be what you want. But keep quiet!' " Küng said. "Of course, when I saw that, I had to say, 'Well, I cannot just keep quiet about infallibility,' and now we see more and more that it is the crux of the whole system. It is the main reason why they are unable to correct themselves." Not only about women, I realized, but about their silence during the Holocaust. The doctrine of infallibility is like a virus that paralyzes the body of the Church.

Küng was leaning across the table toward me. Our champagne glasses stood between us, practically untouched. "In order to solve this problem, they would have to say, 'This is the wrong kind of teaching.' They would have to say, 'It proved to be an error.' "

But where is the mechanism for admitting error? I asked Küng whether the absolutism with which the Church defends this tradition reduces infallibility to the absurd.

"Yes," he replied. "Exactly."

"How long will it take for this system finally to fall?"

"One effect of all this should be that the American cardinals should go to Rome"—when it is time for a conclave to elect John Paul II's successor—"along with the other cardinals, knowing that if we get another Pope of this kind, that— What will we say? It will be difficult for people like myself who always defended the Papacy in principle. I am still defending the importance of such an office, even though they have done a great deal of harm to me. But I think it could survive in a very beautiful way, if we could have a John XXIV—and not a John Paul III. If we get a John Paul III, I think you can forget the Papacy."

Finally, I asked Küng about the relationship between the Church's current institutional crisis and its behavior during the Holocaust. He considered th question carefully. He had lived his entire adult life in the shadow of thos events, but, like many people, he had onl gradually come to understand their broa implications. He looked over at me an said, "I realized the problems for the firs time when I was at the Second Vatica Council. Then I saw. I then studied th relation between the Church and th Jews. Then I saw it as a major issue, because it was no longer possible to say th Nazis were responsible without saying the Church is co-responsible." A gravity had come into Küng's voice, as i each word's weight were doubled. "In the balance of the Council, I wrote tha Nazi anti-Semitism would have been impossible without two thousand years of Christian anti-Judaism. It was not racial. It was religious."

In "Judaism" Küng wrote, "I am concerned with that past which will not go away, a past which still continues to determine the present and which is still virulent today among large sectors of the nations. A repressed past easily becomes a curse."

Later in the book, Küng elaborated on his charge that Christian anti-Judaism sowed the seeds of the Nazi program. He asked, "And is not the case of the Austrian Catholic Adolf Hitler the most abysmal example of this? Even now many people do not recognize the religious roots of his anti-Semitism." Küng's initial expression of such "self-critical" reflections on the Holocaust, in the mid-sixties, coincided with the beginning of the Church hierarchy's suspicions of him.

"It was then that I got the first really official letter from Archbishop Döpfner, of the German Episcopal Conference, asking how I could write such a thing," he told me. "That was my first conflict with the German bishops. I remember that I said, 'I wrote this because I think it is the truth.' "

A Church tradition of anti-Judaism is one thing, I said, but what about the Church's behavior in the years of the genocide?

"How's this for an idea—the first hundred-million-dollar independent film!"

Küng nodded sadly. "When you read Cardinal Hlond's statement in 1936"—hat "there will be the Jewish problem as long as the Jews remain"—"it was ust terrible." Küng reprinted Hlond's attack on Jews in "Judaism," and asked, 'Is that the authentic voice of the Catholic and Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels?" No, he answered, it was the voice of the Primate of Poland, expressing the view of all too many Christians.

"This young American, Goldhagen," Küng was saying now, "is, of course, right to think that a lot of people collaborated. As a matter of fact, we need to underscore such a thing."

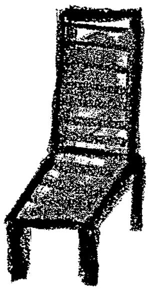
Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, an assistant professor of government and social studies at Harvard, in his 1996 book "Hitler's Willing Executioners," extensively details the failure of the Christian churches in Germany. Following the historian Guenther Lewy, he moves the focus away from the great sin of omission—what the churches did not do—and toward their positive role in the Nazis' genocidal project: that of supplier of crucial records. Goldhagen writes, "The foundational element of the Nuremberg Laws was the regime's capacity to distinguish and demonstrate the extent of a person's Jewish ancestry, to know who was a Jew. Enforcement therefore depended upon the use of the genealogical records in the possession of local churches." Goldhagen cites Lewy's statement "The very question of whether the Church should lend its help to the Nazi state in sorting out people of Jewish descent was never debated." A few heroes among the clergy, including Angelo Roncalli, the future Pope John XXIII, exploited the Church's function as a racial-certification agent to provide false identity documents to Jews, but the institutional Church never renounced this role. "The cooperation of the Church in this matter continued right through the war years," Lewy writes. This fact leads Goldhagen to include certain Church officials among the perpetrators, or "agents of destruction."

"What defines a perpetrator?" he asks. "A perpetrator is anyone who knowingly contributed in some intimate way to the mass slaughter of Jews. . . . Perpetrators include railroad engineers and administrators who knew that they were transporting Jews to their deaths. They include any Church officials who knew that their participation in the identification of Jews as non-Christians would lead to the deaths of the Jews."

I asked Küng if he thought that the Church could face up to such complicity.

He shrugged, and said, "This Pope likes to make some kind of confession. He sees that it is necessary, but if you see the thing carefully it is still not very clear."

I thought again of John Paul II's record as a bridge-builder to Jews. The Anti-Defamation League has published a compilation of the public statements the Pope made on Jews, Judaism, and the Holocaust from 1979 to 1995. The collection is impressive, but each case is a variation on his visit to the Roman synagogue in 1986—a sympathetic acknowledgment of what Jews suffered but a firm avoidance of significant Church responsibility. The behavior of Catholic heroes is often highlighted.



Küng went on, "I mean, it is the same way for Galileo. He said, 'Yes, there were errors on both sides.' " (John Paul II spoke of "a tragic mutual incomprehension.") "What?" Küng banged the table. "Galileo was right. The others were wrong. Now they have acknowledged Darwin finally, but they never say, 'We made a terrible mistake. We censored books,' and so on. It is always a half-truth: 'Some of us sinned,' yes. But John Paul II will never say 'Pius XII made a serious mistake. My predecessor made a serious mistake.' "

I thought of John Paul's 1994 call for atonement. "Do you think the turning of the millennium could be an occasion of such moral reckoning?" I asked.

Küng shook his head abruptly, looking all at once like Martin Luther. The Jubilaeum A.D. 2000? "They will use this in Rome as they always have done it: first, for money-making; and then for big manifestations."

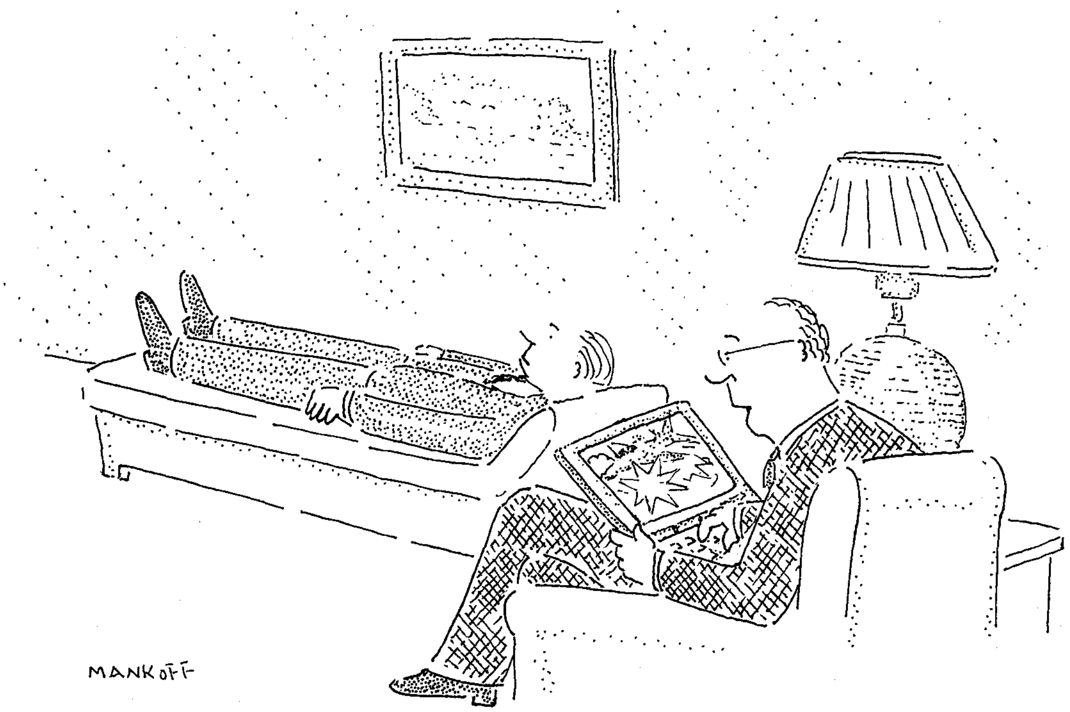
III—WOJTYLA IN KRAKÓW

WHEN Poland's Cardinal Hlond issued his anti-Semitic diatribe in 1936, Karol Wojtyla was sixteen years old. His biographer Tad Szulc writes, "It is doubtful that Wojtyla was aware of the pastoral letter." In any case, there is reason to believe he would have been appalled by it even then. He was living with his widowed father in a three-room apartment on the second floor of a house in Wadowice, thirty miles from Kraków. Two days after my meeting with Hans Küng, I climbed the stairs of that house, to stand in the room where Lolek, as he was known, spent the first eighteen years of his life. The house is now a museum devoted to the Pope, but when Wojtyla lived there its owners, who resided on the first floor, were Jews. A quarter of the citizens of the town were Jews. Wojtyla took the presence of Jews as neighbors and friends for granted, Szulc writes. He grew up free of any hint of anti-Semitism, even though in prewar Poland he was surrounded by it.

Wojtyla went to Kraków for university studies in 1938, just a year before the Nazi occupiers moved in. He was pressed into working in a limestone quarry during the day, but by night he defied the Germans by attending meetings of a secret theatre group—an act of cultural resistance—and then, beginning in 1942, by studying in a clandestine seminary. One of his fellow-seminarians, Jerzy Zachuta, was arrested by the Gestapo and shot. Like most Poles in Kraków, Wojtyla knew what was happening at nearby Auschwitz, and so did his religious superiors.

Secret reports of the unfolding atrocity were forwarded to Rome by the archbishop of Kraków, Adam Sapieha. A prince, Sapieha was slim, had a dark complexion, and wore his hair cut close to his scalp. An altogether intimidating figure, Sapieha is regarded by Poles as a hero of the resistance against the Nazi occupiers. Unlike prelates who fled the country, including Hlond, and unlike some who collaborated, Sapieha coöperated with the Germans as little as possible. He maintained a forbidden link with Rome, declined to supply information that the Germans wanted, and ran the clandestine seminary.

"For five and a half years we lived in a dimension completely different"—this is Czeslaw Milosz describing life in occupied Poland—"from that which any literature or experience could have led us to know. What we beheld surpassed



“You think you have problems? My entire wing command was just destroyed.”

• •

the most daring and the most macabre imagination.” An indication of that daring lies in the fact that directly across the street from Sapieha’s palace, the site of the seminary, was Gestapo headquarters. The lean young Wojtyla, in overalls and clogs, a worker’s hat pulled low over his brow, would have slipped through the darkened alleys under the noses of the enemy. After leaving the theatre group, he became an organizer of the Living Rosary, young men meeting in cells to pray and discuss the faith. This was hardly a wing of the armed-resistance movement, yet such gatherings were as stringently outlawed as any aimed at military struggle. “I used to talk to Karol about these matters, as we felt the ring of danger tightening around us.” This is the testimony of Wojtyla’s fellow-seminarian Mieczyslaw Malinski, writing after his friend’s election as Pope. “We realized that at any moment the Gestapo might get wind of our meetings and pack us all off to Auschwitz—they would never believe that we met for purely religious purposes.”

Once, in fact, Wojtyla was arrested by the Gestapo, then let go. Another time, he was run down by a German military vehicle, and it didn’t stop after hitting him. He woke up in a hospital with head injuries, which exempted him from labor for a time. In August of 1944, he stopped going to work at the limestone quarry and holed up in the seminary in Sapieha’s palace. That month, in reaction to the Polish Home Army uprising in Warsaw, the Germans rounded up thousands of young men in Kraków. Wojtyla narrowly escaped. From then on, Malinski writes, “both Karol and I were in particular danger, since we were registered as engaged in work of importance to the war effort. We debated what to do, and agreed that if anyone was arrested on our account, we would of course come forward.” Wojtyla understood what was at stake. His friend warned him about Auschwitz: “The only way out of there is through the chimney.”

In the history of the Church’s response to the genocide, Archbishop Sapieha, Wojtyla’s mentor, is a problematic figure—one could even say an emblematic figure. He was far from being a collaborator, but although he had a more intimate knowledge of activities at Auschwitz than any other senior Church official, he was not a protester, either. Though individual priests and nuns, who themselves were being hauled off by the thousands as the Nazis acted to suppress the Polish Church, risked their lives to help Jews, the hierarchy’s effort was in behalf of thos Jews who had converte and it backfired: whe baptized converts wer identified in the hop that the Nazis would spar them, the Gestapo used th identifications to round u those Jews, too.

After “The Deputy” called the world’s attention to what Hochhuth in his play, regarded a Pius XII’s reprehensibl silence, the Vatican offered a justification for it namely, that if His Holiness had denounced the Nazi assault against the Jews he would have only worsened their plight—and, not incidentally, that of Catholics. As part of this Vatican justification, a secret correspondence between Pius XII and Archbishop Sapieha was published. The emissaries who carried letters between Kraków and Rome were brought forward, in order to suggest that Sapieha himself was one of those who strongly urged the Pope to keep silent. In a letter dated October 28, 1942—just as the machines of the Final Solution moved into high gear—Sapieha wrote to Pius, “We regret very much that we cannot communicate Your Holiness’s letter”—of August, 1942—“to our faithful, but it would give rise to fresh persecutions.” Ironically, the letter Sapieha refers to here was, according to Carlo Falconi, the author of “The Silence of Pius XII,” “harmless. . . . Their invitations to acceptance and resignation were anything but calculated to arouse German resentment.” If Sapieha had to worry about arousing a reaction, Falconi writes, it would “surely have come from the Poles, exasperated by the Pope’s scandalous acquiescence.” Pius XII spoke out for Polish Catholics hardly more than for Jews.

THERE were Poles who did choose to react. “The world observes this crime, more terrible than any seen by history—and it is silent. The massacre of millions of defenseless people is tak-ng place amid a universal, ominous ilence." This was from "Protest!," a roadside published by Zofia Kossak-zczucka, a Catholic founder of the Council for Aid of the Jews. It appeared n September, 1942, just as Pius XII and apieha were urging silence on each ther. She implicitly aimed her fire at he Church. "He who does not condemn, condones!" she wrote. "We do not have the means to act against the German murderers, we cannot advise, we can save no one, but we *protest!* This protest is demanded of us by God. . . . He among us who does not support this protest is not a Catholic!" Kossak-Szczucka was arrested and taken to Auschwitz in 1943. She survived. A diary she kept was published after the war, under the title "From the Abyss."

A far more benign assessment of Archbishop Sapieha comes from John Paul II himself, in "Gift and Mystery," a series of autobiographical sketches published last year, in observance of his fiftieth anniversary. "A powerful influence on our whole period of formation for the priesthood," he writes, "was exercised by the future Cardinal Adam Stefan Sapieha, whom I remember with affection and gratitude." Tad Szulc calls John Paul II "the unchanged spiritual child of wartime Kraków," and one could say, by extension, of Sapieha himself, who perhaps filled a void in the young man's life after his real father died, of a heart attack, in 1941. Szulc is right, but still it seems odd to call Wojtyla "unchanged." During the war, his Jewish friends were disappearing, and he knew it. They "were condemned for no other reason than that they were Jewish," he writes in his 1994 best-seller, "Crossing the Threshold of Hope." "Even if only indirectly, whoever lived in Poland at that time came into contact with this reality. Therefore, this was also a personal experience of mine, an experience I carry with me even today."

How could Wojtyla not have been changed when, upon his return from Rome in 1948, he attended a class reunion and found that the Jews of Wadowice were gone, simply gone? Only then, he says in "Gift and Mystery," did the full scope of the destruction come home to him. As bishop and cardinal, Wojtyla was not like Sapieha, or like any of the Church figures who turned a blind eye to Jews. It is as if, once they disappeared, he devoted himself, especially as Pope, to seeking Jews out. The point of Wojtyla's entire life is how much his confrontation with the Holocaust *did* change him; the fate of the Jews is at the center of his consciousness.

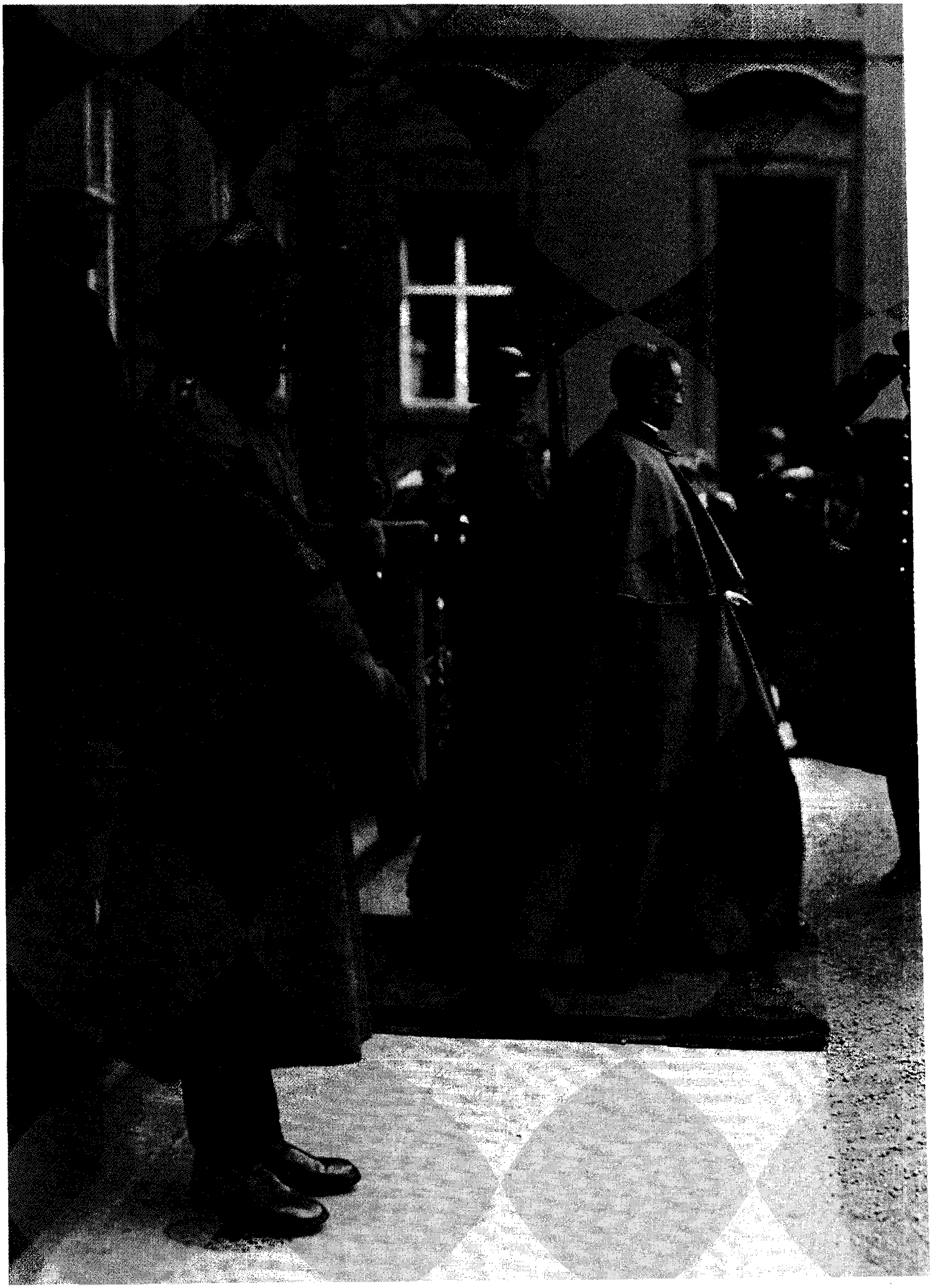
WHEN I arrived in Kraków, I wanted to see for myself the ordination chapel in the Archbishops' Palace, on Kraków's Franciszkanska Street, but my driver told me not to bother—no one gains admittance to the Archbishops' Palace. After checking into my hotel, I wandered the narrow streets of the medieval center. Night had fallen. Citizens were rushing home. Trams clanged. I made my way to Franciszkanska Street and found the palace, a large, undistinguished building. The stout wooden gate was firmly shut. A small sign read "Kuria Metropolitalna." I retreated to a spot across the street, near a broad vacant lot that once, perhaps, had served as the site of Gestapo offices. The palace gave away none of its secrets, and it was easy to imagine a seminary hidden within its walls. A streetcar passed between me and the palace; its rattle teased my sense of time.

Now the gate swung open. Light from an illuminated carriageway spilled into the street. A workman in overalls appeared, carrying a toolbox. He hurried away, a man heading home.

The heavy gate was slowly swinging shut behind him. I dashed across the street and caught the gate before it latched. I went in. The arched carriageway extended the width of the building, which, it now became apparent, was only one wing of a very large complex, arranged around a courtyard with trees, gardens, and a parking lot. A larger-than-life statue dominated one end of the courtyard, and in the darkness it took me a moment to recognize the vested figure of John Paul II.

At that moment, a door opened in the corner of the courtyard and a priest appeared. I walked toward him as if I belonged there. As we passed each other, I gestured toward the door and raised an eyebrow. May I? He nodded, which I took for permission. The door was unlocked. I entered the palace. Mov-

"That will be perfect. We have a lot to talk about."



Pius XII, before his election to the Papacy, leaving a reception for President Hindenburg in Berlin. Pius's acquiesce

ource of John Paul II's paradox.

ing through shadowy hallways, I found a broad staircase and took it up to an arcaded foyer. Wall sconces cast light enough to see the huge portraits of red-robed prelates: "Bernard Kardynal Maciejowski, 1601-1608," read the plate on one. On the floor in front of another portrait was a pot of flowers; the painting thus revered showed Wojtyla as Pope—the papal seal on a field of blue, his eyes looking very friendly.

A nearby set of doors stood ready for me, and I went through into a dark room the size of a long squash court. The scent of stale incense and candle wax told me where I was even before I noticed a flame flickering in the distance—the sanctuary lamp. I saw a pair of ghostlike forms in the front of the chapel. A light was switched on, a reading lamp, enough for me to see that the two forms were nuns on their knees. One cast a look at me, then went back to her devotions. I walked up the aisle.

At the sanctuary step, I thought of young Wojtyla in the ordination ceremony "lying prostrate on the floor in the form of a cross," as he put it in "Gift and Mystery." His account went on, "The tragedy of the war . . . helped me to understand in a new way *the value and importance of a vocation.* In the face of the spread of evil and the atrocities of the war, the meaning of the priesthood and its mission in the world became much clearer."

On the same day that Wojtyla was ordained—November 1, 1946—ashes had been brought from Auschwitz for a symbolic burial in Kraków's Rakowicki Cemetery. I had imagined a ceremony honoring Jews, but a detailed map I consulted marked the cemetery with a small cross, identifying it as Catholic. Wojtyla's father is buried there. A pair of Stars of David identified the Zydowski and Ramu Cemeteries, about a mile away. Jews had been buried there since the sixteenth century, beginning with refugees from Spain. And in the twentieth century? I wondered if the ashes of the many Catholic victims in Auschwitz had been separated from the ashes of the far more numerous Jewish victims.

Karol Wojtyla left this chapel a half century ago, wanting only to give himself to God, the Church, and the world. Already, in 1946, he was a kind of hero, and already he showed signs of being able, for one thing, to bring about the beginnings of a historic reconciliation between Catholics and Jews. But would his sense of mission—what leads him to define the millennium by imposing the Cross upon the globe—thwart his generous heart? As cardinal, Wojtyla would offer earth mingled with ashes from Auschwitz II-Birkenau to the bishops of countries whose citizens had died there. Presumably, urns holding those ashes now sit in the reliquaries of the great cathedrals of Europe. The ashes remain a symbol of grief, but they are also, unavoidably, an emblem of religious entitlement.

IN 1971, Wojtyla, as Cardinal of Kraków, made a momentous journey to Auschwitz. He went to celebrate the beatification—the penultimate step toward sainthood—of Maximilian Kolbe, a priest who died in the camp after volunteering to take the place of another prisoner. Wojtyla's sermon was simply an expression of the mission he had embraced, but it set in motion a disastrous sequence of events. Once more demonstrating his ample good faith, Wojtyla had proposed the founding of a Catholic shrine at the death camp. "A church should be erected as, since the first centuries of Christianity, churches have been created on the tombs of martyrs and saints," he said.

Ten nuns of the Discalced Carmelites, an order associated with John of the Cross, young Wojtyla's dissertation subject and mystical ideal, realized Wojtyla's vision when, in 1984, they established a convent at Auschwitz, intending to devote themselves to prayer and penance. The local town council signed over to them a building abutting the camp wall—an old theatre in which the Nazis had warehoused jewelry, gold, and other valuables stolen from prisoners.

The Carmelite convent generated a storm of protest from Jewish leaders, some of whom granted the nuns' good intentions but nevertheless saw their prayers as attempts to claim the dead Jews for their own, much as

FPG INT'L

the Jews' ashes had been conscripted to serve as Catholic relics. Other Jews saw the convent in the context of the Church's behavior during the Second World War. A 1986 resolution of the European Jewish Congress stated, "When our brothers and sisters met their death in Auschwitz, they were surrounded by a total silence on the part of the world and a very significant silence on the part of the Church. We cannot tolerate that prayers should take place, even in the best of intentions, in this place, from those who could have, at the right time, raised their voice for our brothers and sisters and who did not do so."

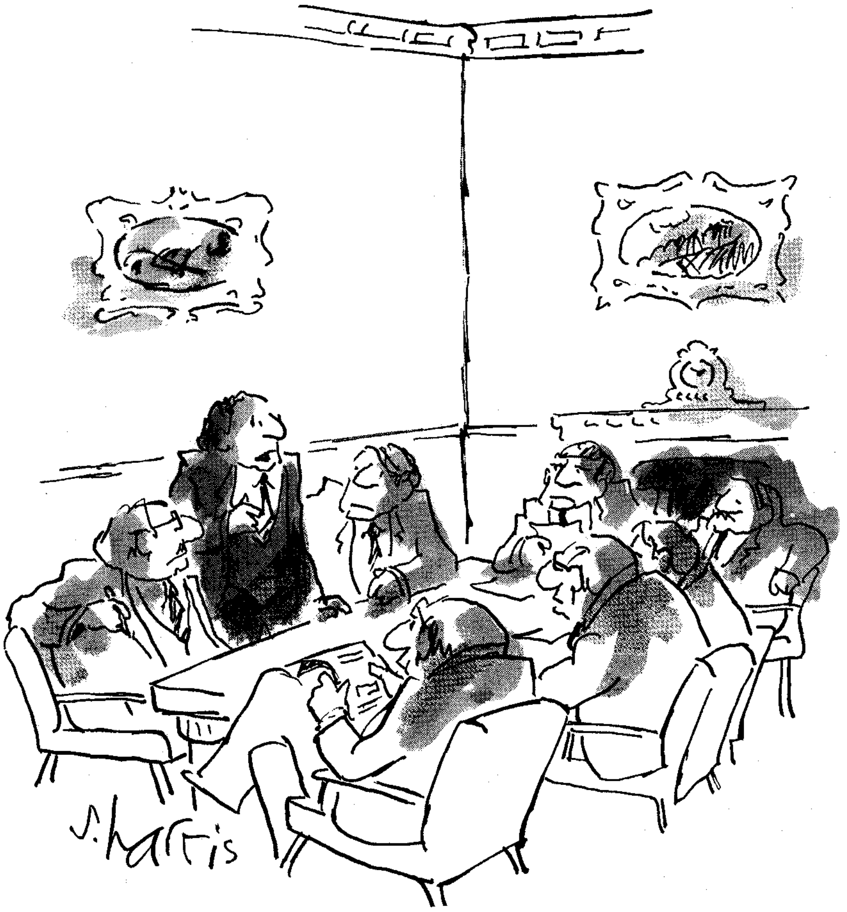
The controversy became international news in 1989, when seven American Jews, clothed in stripes evoking the dress of camp inmates, "invaded" the convent grounds. "Leave our dead alone," their banners read. Again showing his capacity to learn and to change, John Paul II intervened on the side of the Jews, addressing a personal appeal to the Carmelites, and to his countrymen. As a result, the conflict was resolved. The Holy See sponsored the construction of a new building for the nuns, on a site several hundred yards away from the wall of Auschwitz, and the sisters moved in 1993. Yet the shadow of Auschwitz had once again reached to the Vatican; and although John Paul II has done more than any other Roman Pontiff to bridge the gulf between Christians and Jews, the legacy of anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, in Tad Szulc's words, "has haunted John Paul II's papacy almost from the moment of his election . . . more than any other non-Church problem." But anti-Semitism is, of course, precisely a Church problem, just as the record of the Vatican's silence during the Holocaust remains a Church problem. At Auschwitz, one asks if there isn't another problem, and if it isn't even deeper.

IV—THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

THE open fields of the ruined camp at Auschwitz II–Birkenau are bisected by the mythic railroad track and platform, and punctuated by dozens of well-ordered chimneys. The chimneys were not part of the ma crematoria, which the Nazis d stroyed and which lie in ruins in corner of the camp. Rather, the chimneys were the flues of standard fir places, remnants of the wooden ba racks where doomed inmates waite By contrast, the brick barracks in th main camp at Auschwitz I, two mil away, still stand, walls and roofs as we as chimneys.

At the wall of Auschwitz I is th former Carmelite convent, a three story brick building with a steep pitched roof, topped by the horn of siren. It houses a government archiv now. The most striking thing abou the site is a wooden cross, twenty-thre feet high, that remains planted in grassy plot beside the building. Th day of my visit, true to November, wa shrouded in cold fog, and the stout beamed cross loomed in the fore ground, dominating the nearby wa and the mist-covered barracks buildings. The cross was erected in 1989, b local supporters of the nuns. It is th same cross that stood on the altar in Auschwitz II–Birkenau when John Paul II celebrated a Mass there, in 1979. In his sermon that day, he called the death camp "the Golgotha of the contemporary world."

Beyond the cross, just over the wall, is the most notorious of the more than two dozen death-camp barracks—Block XI, containing the "hunger bunker," in which many prisoners were systematically put to death. One of those prisoners was Maximilian Kolbe. Though Kolbe has since been canonized, he is an ambiguous figure for many Jews and for some Christians; before his internment by the Nazis he had aided Jewish refugees and spoken against the Third Reich, but he had also been the founder of an anti-Semitic journal. Kolbe's death, on August 14, 1942, underscored the Vatican's policy of detached silence, for when *L'Osservatore Romano* reported it no mention was made of the circumstances in which the priest died. Now those same circumstances are emphasized. Flowers are strewn in Kolbe's cell, and the cross within sight of it evokes the memory of the many other Catholics who died in Auschwitz I. Edith Stein, a Jewish philosopher who



"This is goodbye, gentlemen. I have met another board of directors, and we have fallen in love."

ecame a Catholic convert and, as it appened, a Carmelite nun, died in the as chambers. She, too, has been beati- ed, by John Paul II. (In total, more han three thousand priests, monks, nd nuns were murdered by the Ger- mans in occupied Poland.)

But a cross also stands next to Auschwitz II–Birkenau, where the ictims were overwhelmingly Jew- ish. There, too, a building from the Nazi era has been converted. This one, t the camp perimeter, was built as the esidence of the German commandant. t has been transformed into the Ro- man Catholic parish church of the vil- age of Birkenau. The cross is mounted on the roof.

WHAT the Sign of the Cross means to John Paul II can be under- tood through the words of the great esuit theologian the late Karl Rah- ner: “Because of Jesus Christ, Chris- ianity understands itself as the abso- ute religion, intended for all men, which cannot recognize any other re- igion besides itself as of equal right.” Rahner was a mid-twentieth-century ecclesiastical liberal who helped dis- credit the dictum “Outside the Church there is no salvation.” He rejected the judgment of the Council of Florence “that none of those existing outside the Catholic Church, not only pagans, but also Jews and heretics and schismatics, can have a share in life eternal, but that they will go into the eternal fire which was prepared for the devils.” (Its promulgation, in 1442, prepared the way for the expulsion of Jews from Spain fifty years later, and influenced the conquest of pagans in America.)

Among Church reformers, the triumphalism of the Church has often been replaced by the triumphalism of Jesus, and this was true of Rahner, who tried to soften the latent religious imperialism of such an “absolute religion” by designating people of good will, whether they’d heard of Jesus or not, as “anonymous Christians.” Without knowing it and without being known, such people could come to God as Buddhists, Jews, Muslims, even atheists—but, essentially and perennially, they were doing so as Christians. Because the idea of the “anonymous Christian” is offensive to the very people whose prospects for salvation this theology seeks to protect, it is not commonly spoken of. In Vatican II, the Church officially adopted an attitude of respect toward other religions. Yet, because traditional theologians insist upon the primacy of Jesus as a means of salvation, and upon the Church as “the absolute religion,” some form of this theology remains the ground even of much Catholic ecumenism.

Giant Pretzel

According to this view, the Cross is properly imposed not only upon Auschwitz but upon the globe. When articulated by an innovator like Rahner or embodied by a man of virtue like Wojtyla, this can be an apparently benign vision. But the Cross has often been used as a sign of conquest rather than one of human fallibility, as it was for Jesus. Intolerance and forgiveness are the poles here. That is why the argument about a renewal of the Church—as Küng puts it, the movement from an age of medieval religious absolutism to an age of true ecumenical respect among religions—is so passionate. Padraic O’Hare, for example, is one of a growing cadre of Catholic theologians who dissent from a triumphal vision of the Cross. He is a professor of religious studies at Merrimack College and a veteran of the Catholic-Jewish dialogue, who has written or edited seven books, including the recently published “Enduring Covenant.” In a conversation in Boston, he elaborated on his book, equating “universalist Christian claims” about Jesus with “religion as a source of brutality.” He was emphatic, saying, “Universalist absolutism thrives on the diminishment of the other.” In that way, to erect the Cross at Auschwitz—to suggest that the Holocaust can thus be made meaningful, to imply that the millions killed at a contemporary Golgotha may be resurrected, to assume that the murder of Jews can thus be atoned for—keeps the diminishment in place.

A FEW weeks after returning to America, I met with Daniel Goldhagen in his Harvard office. He sat among hundreds of books, a dark-eyed man with an intense gaze. “If the Church has any claim to moral legitimacy, any claim to being a moral beacon, then it has to discharge that failure”—its silence during the Holocaust and its complicity in the Nazi identification system. “It has to come to terms with it quite openly and directly and honestly,” Goldhagen said.

That John Paul II has reasserted the idea of infallibility, on the one hand, while demonstrating an unprecedented and genuine sympathy for Jews, on the other, is the great paradox of his papacy. And it could yet become his tragedy, for what is needed “after Auschwitz” is an adjustment in attitudes not toward Jews but toward the claim the Church makes on the soul of the world. Jews are, in a very real sense, the original and quintessential dissenters from that claim; Judaism calls into question the supremacist universalism of Christology. “For Christianity,” O’Hare writes, “the fundamental fact of absolutism, the false pride on which it rests, and the demonization of the other to which it leads, is the Holocaust.” In these terms, the Holocaust is not the indictment; it is the evidence.

For O’Hare and other theologians who are attempting to de-absolutize Christian claims, Hans Küng remains an inspiration. “Occasionally, you are very lucky that a hero of your youth is a hero of your middle life,” O’Hare told me. “Küng is enduring and permanent. A man for all seasons.”

Ironically, it was when Küng lost his license to teach Roman Catholic theology that he turned his attention to other religions. “Because we had the big fight in 1979, I was liberated,” he told me in Tübingen. “I had to leave the Catholic faculty . . . which was considered a punishment, but which was a liberation.” It was then, he said, that he could turn his attention “to Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Chinese religion . . . to think through all these problems.” Küng isn’t the only one who has sought to open the Catholic mind to other religious experience. Tissa Balasuriya, the excommunicated Sri Lankan theologian, who works in a predominantly Buddhist culture, is another. The excommunication decree explicitly connects Catholic universalist claims—which, among other points of doctrine, Balasuriya is accused of denying—with their distilled essence, papal infallibility. Though signed by Ratzinger, the excommunication was "ordered" by John Paul II, whose readiness to pronounce such anathemas shores up not only infallibility but the age-old Christian impulse to make devils of those who beg to differ.

That is why Küng insists, with a prophet's edge, that the long-term alternative to true ecumenical openness is something terrible. The lesson of the Holocaust applies not only to Catholics but to all believers. "The survival of humanity is at stake," Küng says. "There will be no peace among the nations without peace among the religions."

THROUGHOUT this journey, I never shook the image of Father Anton Luli, the aged Albanian Jesuit who, after a lifetime in a Communist prison, received that heartfelt embrace from John Paul II. The Pope's response to this one man seemed almost to offset the institutional and theological dilemmas that have surfaced during his papacy. Having been embraced once myself by Pope John XXIII, I continued to wonder what it was like to be in the arms of the overpowering Wojtyla. I never met Father Luli, but I spoke to someone else who has had that experience.

As it happened, he is a Jew—Abraham Foxman, the national director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. Foxman had first met John Paul II in 1979, when he told the Pope his story. While the young Lolek Wojtyla was spending his nights in the secret seminary, Abraham Foxman, born in 1940, was a Polish infant whose parents were taken off to the ghetto. They left their baby in the care of a nanny, Bronislawa Kurpi, a Catholic who, at the risk of her life, took the child into her own home. She changed his name, falsified documents, and, with the collusion of a Polish priest, had the baby baptized as if he were her own child. As a result, he survived.

The same thing happened all over occupied Europe, and today, according to Foxman's estimate, there may be more than ten thousand sons and daughters of Jews who were saved by "rescue baptisms." These survivors have come to be called "the Hidden Jews," which is the same phrase once applied to Jews of the Inquisition era who, having submitted to baptism rather than die, secretly continued to practice their faith. Hidden Jews today include those, like Madeleine Albright, whose parents converted to Christianity. Many raised their children without telling them of their Jewish origins. But Foxman's main concern is with the children whose parents never returned. The vast majority of these orphans were reared as Catholics by people who pretended to be their birth parents. Because it was a matter of life and death, everything took place in secret. Records reflecting the falsified identities of the baptized children would likely be sealed. Some of the baptized children were old enough to know the truth, and some of them, like the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, Jean-Marie Lustiger, whose mother died in Auschwitz, made informed decisions to remain Catholic. Most, however, were too young to know. Now come reports that the aging or dying "parents" are telling more and more of these middle-aged men and women that they were born as Jews and that their true parents perished in the camps.

Abraham Foxman's birth parents were among the few who survived the camps, and after the liberation they returned for him. He was five years old. The family made its way to the United States. By the time he met the Pope, Foxman was the leader of a Jewish delegation to the Vatican. John Paul II greeted the delegates as they were shown into his library in the Apostolic Palace. He invited them to sit, then took his place in a gilded chair on a slightly elevated platform. Foxman stood and stepped forward. "Your Holiness," he said, "I was born in Baranowicz, Poland. I am a survivor of the Holocaust. I am alive today because of the compassion and humanity of a Polish Catholic woman who risked her life to save me from the Nazis."

The Pope leaned forward, eying his visitor. Foxman told me, "When you talk to him, it is as though the whole world does not exist. He talks only to you."

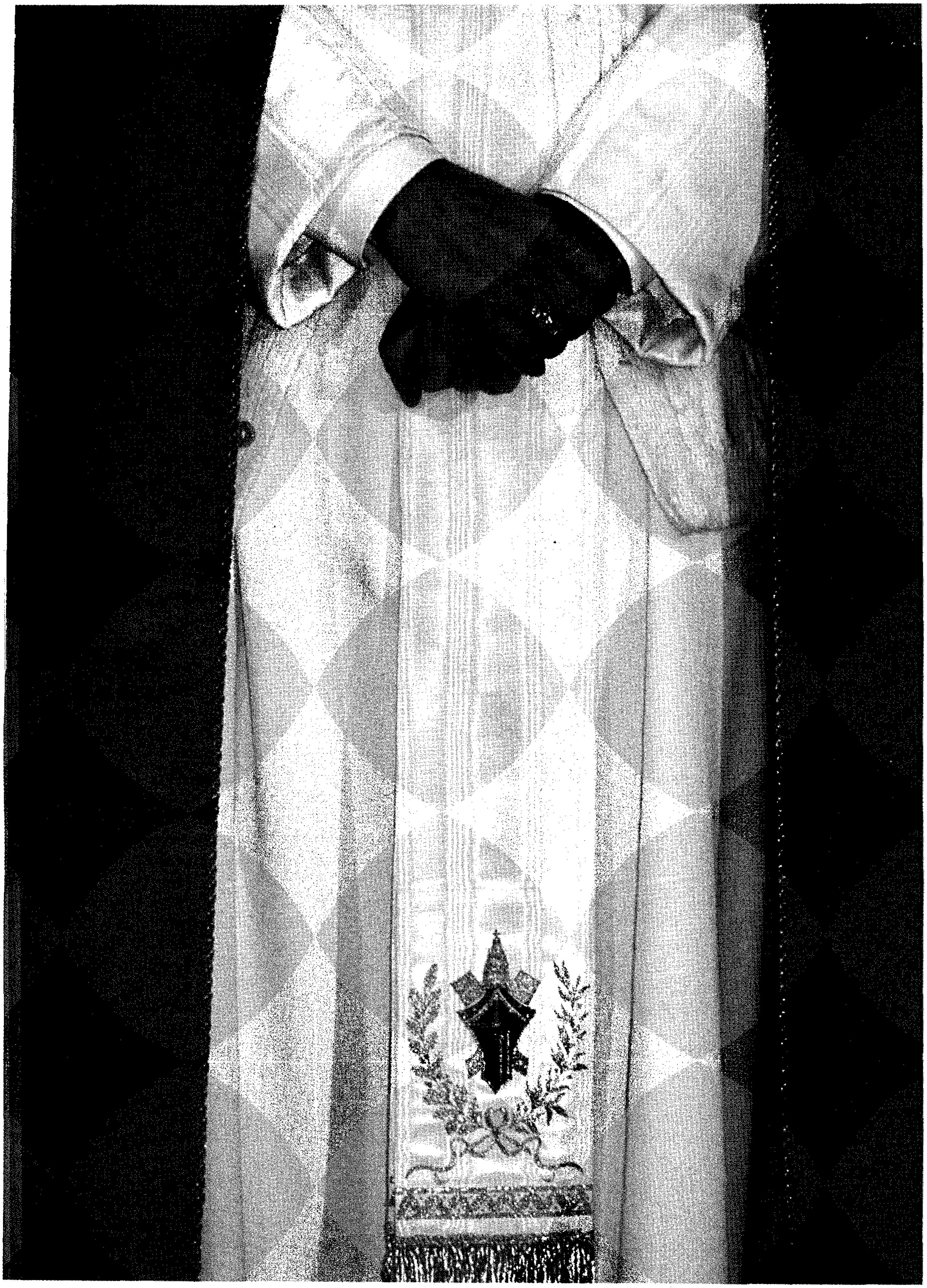
Foxman continued his statement to the Pope. "I want to again express my thanks to her through you." Bronislaw Kurpi died in 1956. "I ask that yo bless her soul."

"When I finished," Foxman told m "I was a little choked up. He came o the seat, and he embraced me. H came off the chair. 'Thank you,' th Pope said. He embraced me as one human being to another. It was an *abbra* *cio*. He held me. He wouldn't let m go. 'Thank you,' His Holiness sai again, 'for your very moving word Thank you for what you have said, fo you are bearing testimony to huma kindness.' It was a fatherly embrace. H wasn't the Pontiff. He wasn't the exalted. He was just a human being."

That was in 1979. In 1994, Foxman, part of another delegation, me John Paul II again, this time at Caste Gandolfo, the papal summer residence "I made reference to our first meeting, Foxman told me, "to how I feel, t what he represents to me personally and to what the Church represents t me. That the Church gave me life through that lady."

Again the Pope's response was heartfelt. But by now Foxman had become an advocate for the Hidden Jews. Tha day, after the audience with the Pope he met with Vatican officials and asked that they urge parish churches to open the records of Jewish children saved by Catholics during the war. Momentum had been building to give people who wanted to learn about their past access to the records of rescue baptisms. Ironically, baptismal records, which, as instruments of Aryan identification, had played a key role in the genocide, had moved to the forefront again. Foxman argued that they would enable perhaps thousands of people to ask, if not answer, the most fundamental personal questions. He also argued for the Church's own reputation. "It would open a magnificent chapter for the Church," he said. "These files would scream out with a message that says, 'There was courage! There was beauty! There was true spirituality!' "

The Vatican officials heard Abraham Foxman's plea with due courtesy, but they were noncommittal. Since then, he has repeated it publicly, making the case in speeches and press interviews. But there has been no response. The Vatican maintains its silence. ♦



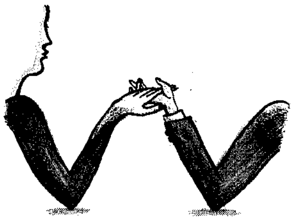
The Pope dared refer to the modern Church's greatest ignominy but then took comfort in the noble memory of the exceptions.

FICTION

SELFISHNESS

The attractions of the older woman.

BY ALICE MATTISON



WHEN a man I like touches my arm or my hair, I want to know if he'll touch the center of me, and whatever I learned in school—I went to school for a long time—I seem to believe that my center can be reached best with the tip of a penis, as though that happy poke permits what I am to radiate through my body and out, like warmth from a dear little stove with a Pennsylvania Dutch design on its iron surface. Pre-AIDS, nobody considered me promiscuous. I am forty-three.

I went to a Fourth of July picnic at a house in the woods in Guilford with a lawyer named Gary, who knew the woman who lived there. We were outdoors under trees, and all anybody talked about was Lyme disease. I was chided for wearing sandals. It was the third time I'd gone out with Gary. The first time he was funny, but the second time he told the same stories, and he was about to tell them again. One that I'd taken to be about someone's charm was really—I saw now—about her stupidity. So I was restless, and then a slight, tough-looking young fellow with dark hair came out of the house carrying a big wooden bowl. He set it on the table, reached in, and bit something: a lettuce leaf. I walked over. "Did you make the salad?" I said.

"I tossed it," he said. "People think oil and vinegar matter—but salt and pepper *really* matter."

The gray-haired woman whose house we were at was going around introducing people, and she came over and put a hand on my shoulder and one on the young man's. She had an unfussy denim-and-chambray look. "Have you met?" she said. "This is my grandson Dennis, and in a second I'll remember your name." She did. "Daisy. Gary's friend Daisy."

"Stay away from Gary," Dennis said, and I looked at him, surprised. "I prefer to be called Denny," he said. His grandmother patted our shoulders and moved on.

"What's wrong with Gary?" I said.

"He warned my grandmother about me."

"Are you dangerous?"

"Not to my grandmother."

Someone came over and Denny walked away, but later he came back to me. "You look interesting," he said. "Are you a psychologist or something?" Then his grandmother asked him to go and buy some more pita bread. "Want to come?" Denny asked me.

We took my car. Gary and I had come in it, and maybe I was stranding him on purpose. As we drove down the driveway, I said, "I'm a teacher at a community college in New Haven."

"No kidding! I can't believe that."

"Why not?"

"It's just interesting."

"Actually," I said, "you remind me of some of my students."

"I don't remind you of bad guys on television?"

I laughed. "Oh, that too, that too."

"Does that community college of yours teach philosophy?" he asked—and he kept on asking questions. "But if your students just don't have time to read something," he was saying when we reached a convenience store. "If they have a job, let's say, and they just don't have time—you mean you don't give them extra time?" I saw a baffled innocence—the students' innocence—cross his face, while his own face, not innocent, somehow showed through underneath.

"We manage," I said. "I'm nice." The place had no pita bread. We never found any. We went to Friendly's for iced coffee, and Denny made up stories about teen-agers in the other booths. "Now, she shoplifts underpants," he said of one ordinary-looking girl. "Dozens of pairs. Do you know how to fix it so the alarm doesn't go off when you carry something out of a store with that plastic tag still on?"

"No, how?"

"Well, it's not worth it. You have t get the tag off later."

"But how, really?"

His hair hung in front of his eyes an he looked through it over his rather larg nose at me. "Oh, it has to do with magnets. I'll show you sometime." I looke into his intelligent blue eyes while w laughed.

By the time we returned to the picnic it was over. We walked up the driveway while Denny's grandmother strod toward us, her skirt swinging. "I gav them English muffins," she called. "Somebody drove Gary home."

"Oh, good." I kissed each of them o the cheek, walked back to my car, an drove away, done with Gary.

Denny had looked at me man t woman, not son to mother, and he wa that way with his grandmother, too. Sh was one of his girlfriends. A few week later, I saw the two of them come out o a Thai restaurant and walk down Chape Street. His grandmother, in a long flowered dress that day, matched his loping steps.

The night after we met, Denny called me. I got a little scared because I hadn't told him my last name, but he said he'd called the college that morning and persuaded somebody to read him a list of faculty members. Finally one of them was named Daisy. By evening, when he called me, he'd begun to believe what he'd told the woman on the phone: "So if I want to take a class with you, how do I do that? How much does it cost?" Before I could answer, he said, "You know, there are scholarships for people like me—people who've done time, like me, or been crazy. Prodigal-son scholarships."

"You've done time?" I said.

"Hey, could I come over?" he said then. I said yes, but when he arrived I asked about his parents, to keep him at a distance. His father owned a restaurant in Washington. "I've bussed tables for an our, cooked for an hour," said Denny, ut we've never made it to the Social ecurity-number stage."

"They're divorced?" I said.

"Very divorced. She married Pete hen I was six." He sat opposite me, inking a beer. "You learn a lot about eer with a dad in the restaurant busiess." He lifted the bottle and gazed at a joke—it was ordinary beer.

"You grew up with a stepfather."

"Step by step," Denny said. "Stepping n his toes, being stepped on, stepping out to a friendly guys' basketball ame."

I stood up and sat down next to him nd combed his hair away from his eyes ith one finger. He put the bottle on the oor and clutched me, and in a moment e were embracing as tightly as if we'd pent hours in search of each other in a orest full of dark shadows. Then I led im to my bedroom. "You let people like ne in here?" Denny said.

"I let you."

MY best friend is a man, Philip LoPresti, another teacher, and we ave long talks on the phone at night. hilip says he'd be as likely to go to bed ith people he hardly knows as to turn artwheels in the street. "How do you nake it happen?" he says, not that he's ooking to cheat on his wife, Charlotte, who's my other best friend.

"It's just like turning cartwheels in the street," I tell him. "I do something risky and clear. One time out of three I'm humiliated. The other two times he's so relieved that *he* doesn't have to do the risky thing that he's unzipping his pants in two seconds."

"I don't know . . . " he says.

"You *could* turn cartwheels," I say. Philip could—he learned for a play in college. But sex is more fun for me than for some people. I'm more motivated. All I had to do with Denny was fix his hair. Once I left a guy sitting in a bar, went to a drugstore, bought some condoms, walked back to the bar, and handed him the package.

I told Philip about Denny a few days later, on the phone at night. "How old is he?" Philip said.

"He's over twenty-one," I said. "But not much."

Then he said, "I have fantasies of following you and a man to a bar and pretending I don't know you, just watching to make sure nothing bad happens."

"To me or to him?"

"To you."

"To me?" I said. "No, I'm the perpetrator. The perp." But I was pleased. "Protect me from myself, Phil," I said.

"I'll try," he said. "Now let's hang up and both go to bed."

A few days later Denny showed up at my place as I was about to go out for groceries, and he came along, urging me to buy good cheese, nuts, and dried fruit. Back home, we cooked extra-wide noodles with vegetables and soy sauce. "I love extra-wide noodles," he said. We didn't make love that day, but the next time he came he leaned on the sink and said, "Come here. I'm reading your thoughts."

"What thoughts?" I crossed the room and took his hand.

"How terrible you are to fall in love with me."

"I'm not in love with you!" I said.

"Fall in love with me," he said, kissing me lightly. It was a hot night and his face was pleasantly moist. "Don't fall in love with me. Fall in love with me. Daisy."

One night at the end of July we went for a walk. "Let's get frozen yogurt," Denny said suddenly, steering me in a different direction. As we walked he remarked, "Lots of parked cars. We could play car alarms."

"What's that?"

"We can't really. You need about six people. Each one stands between two parked cars, and you all count to three and bang the cars hard, or kick them."

"Will the alarms go off if you just bang on the cars?"

"Oh, sure."

"But not every car has an alarm."

"You'd be surprised."

"Did you ever really do that?"

"Lots of times. Mostly my kid brother does it. It's a kid thing."

And then we reached the yogurt store. I'd been there once or twice, and I remembered the bulky man with a white beard who owned it. "Pekko, Daisy," Denny said, while Pekko reached over the counter to shake hands with me. "You were both reading 'The Great Gatsby' last week." So Denny was friends with him.

"I was thinking of teaching it," I said to Pekko. "Why were *you* reading it?"

"You're the lady who lends Denny books," he said. "Where do you teach? I've been a teacher. I've done everything." He took our order. "I read a Fitzgerald novel every summer."

I liked that. After he served us our cones he came out from behind the counter and looked Denny over. "Keeping your head on straight?" he said, touching Denny's hair. He looked me over, too. When I meet a lover's friend I always think he's wondering if I wouldn't rather be with him. Maybe it's part of being a mammal, or maybe it goes deeper and is part of being a vertebrate. I wasn't really Denny's girlfriend, but I thought we had that recent-bed look. Pekko didn't wear a wedding ring.

In a few days, I went back to the store alone, and Pekko and I talked. He was divorced, with a grown daughter. He lived on the water in Guilford. He'd fought in Vietnam, then turned against the war and done left-wing political things ever since. He'd been to Nicaragua.

"Look, are you seeing anybody?" he asked me, and I said no. It was true. I hadn't seen Denny since the night of our walk. I never did have a phone number or address for him—he'd just call, or turn up. Pekko invited me to dinner, and within days we were driving to the country, taking walks, and buying large quantities of fruits and vegetables at farm stands like an old married couple about to serve stringbeans to crowds of children and grandchildren. Then we'd try to persuade each other to keep what we'd bought. We'd go to his place or mine and make love, then go out to dinner, feeling guilty about the stringbeans or the blueberries. You can eat blueberries for breakfast, and we did, but if you eat dinner out, what can you do with stringbeans? "When I was going around with Denny," I said on the phone to Philip, "I *cooked* stringbeans. Now I'm throwing them out covered with white fuzz. A nutritionist would say I was doing better before."

"No," said Philip. "This is better. Bring him to dinner. Where did he get a name like Pekko, anyway?"

"It was his grandfather's name."

"Where did his grandfather get it?"

"Denmark? Finland? I forget."

"So what does he think about you and Denny?" he asked.

"We haven't talked about it," I said. "Nothing bothers him." Yet I was a little uncomfortable, waiting for Pekko to talk about me and Denny, waiting to get it over with.

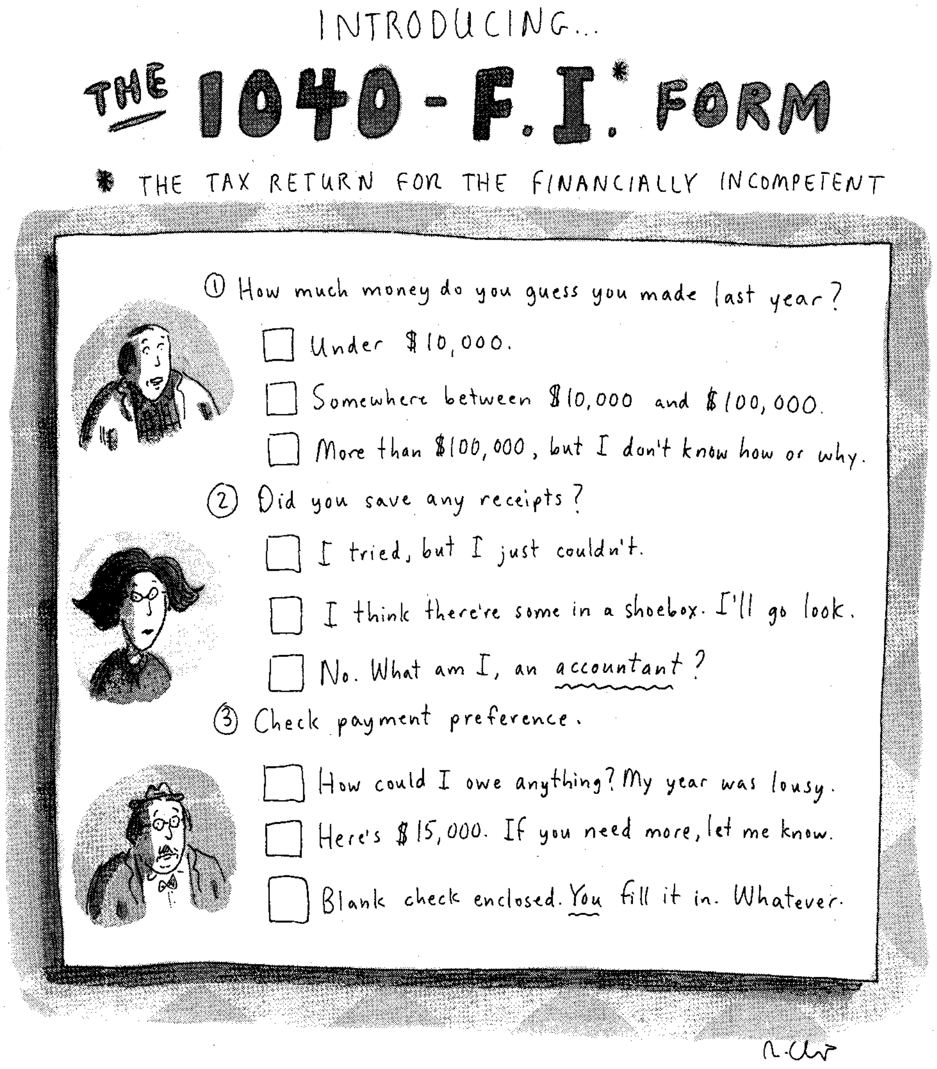
I still hadn't heard from Denny. Maybe I never would again. I was glad I hadn't mentioned him to Charlotte. I thought Philip wouldn't. I'd been keeping Charlotte for later. You shouldn't wear out your confidants with too much truth. That August I spent a lot of time at Pekko's little house on the water. I had been teaching summer school, but now I was free. The weather was hot and I lay in the sun, or read, or talked on the phone. Pekko spent long days at his store, and I liked being alone at the house, aware of him.

CHARLOTTE invited Pekko and me to dinner though she is too busy and serious to give real dinner parties: they'd feel trivial and yet worrisome to her. She has surprised blue eyes (lighter than Denny's) behind glasses. When I met her she stared at me so attentively I thought she didn't like me. It was years ago, at a department party at the college. Charlotte's younger daughter, Olivia, who was then about two, walked up my body with her bare feet braced against my legs while her hands gripped my hands. I loved the feel of that bold child pushing away by holding on, and I still love Olivia, who's now in high school. Charlotte watched this scene from across the room, while I somehow thought she might be disapproving, and then she came over to rescue me, but I didn't want to be rescued.

"You are a welcoming person," she said.

"Do you mean I'm a whore?" I said, and as her daughter dropped my hands and ran off, Charlotte put her own hands on my arms and said, "What is in your head? *What* is in your head?"

Never in our long friendship, I believe, has Charlotte thought I might go after Philip. Maybe they talk about it. I love Philip but can keep my hands off him easily except when he wears certain clothes—some faded canvas pants, example. If he wore those every d what would happen? Are they tigh than his other pants?


INTRODUCING...

THE 1040-F.I.* FORM

* THE TAX RETURN FOR THE FINANCIALLY INCOMPETENT

① How much money do you guess you made last year?

☐ Under $10,000.

☐ Somewhere between $10,000 and $100,000.

☐ More than $100,000, but I don't know how or why.

② Did you save any receipts?

☐ I tried, but I just couldn't.

☐ I think there're some in a shoebox. I'll go look.

☐ No. What am I, an accountant?

③ Check payment preference.

☐ How could I owe anything? My year was lousy.

☐ Here's $15,000. If you need more, let me know.

☐ Blank check enclosed. You fill it in. Whatever.

The afternoon of our dinner at t LoPrestis' Pekko came to my house a we baked a cake to bring along. It h peaches on top, sliced by Pekko. He w wearing a bright-blue shirt with t sleeves rolled up. With his white bea and his belly (not a big belly, but a bell he was always noticeable, and when cooked, with a dish towel tucked into h pants, he looked like a cook on telev sion. I was pleased with myself, about bring him to my friends' house, which did as soon as the cake came out of th oven. I was slim beside him, in a red ski and a red long-sleeved shirt. I'm blon My hair had just been cut. Maybe looked a little older than usual, next to gray-bearded man, but in a good wa like someone growing more interestin as I aged, with the scent of my alarmin youth about me.

It was a relaxed, unfancy meal. I coul see Charlotte trying to make a good impression on Pekko—she knew he'd lik informality—while Philip judged hi pushing his chair back as if he wanted t see Pekko from a few yards away. H was drinking a beer and he kept looking at it when he wasn't looking a Pekko, and I thought of Denny—tha night we first went to bed—turning th bottle of beer in his hand.

"Hey, I *know* you," Pekko had said t Charlotte the minute we arrived. The worked it out that twelve or thirtee years ago—around the time Olivi walked up my dress—Pekko had visite a parent-coöperative day-care center, an there he met Charlotte, the parent o duty. "You were reading to a bunch o children on a big mattress," Pekko said. "One kid had on a feathered hat and nothing else. I wanted to lie down on the mattress and hear the story."

"I can't believe this," said Charlotte.

She was wearing a blue T-shirt and it made her blue eyes more noticeable; I reached to touch her. "Pekko would remember you," I said, loving her hard. "You're so beautiful."

The LoPrestis' older daughter, Amy, was away at college, but Olivia came in while we were eating the peach cake. "Maybe you were the kid in the feathered hat," Pekko said. Then Pekko and Charlotte and Philip talked on about at they'd done in those days, the oups they belonged to, the marches d rallies.

"We were fixing the world back en," Charlotte said.

"Not now?" said Pekko. When he asn't in the store he was always at a eeting or writing a press release.

Charlotte sat back and considered. Vell, sure—I'm a social worker," she id. She cut a little triangle of cake and e it off her palm. "But in those days I tened to entire long speeches."

"Now it's easier to write a check," hilip said.

"At least you do that," I said. "I'm just lfish."

"Are you?" said Philip.

But Pekko was saying, "Oh, I don't now what's good and what's not, these ays. I just spend time with people I ke."

"You do more than that," I said.

"Look," he said earnestly. "I'm on comittees, boards—and there are young ffians in this town I've helped raise om pups. And with the kindness I've hown them, they now have the confience to commit not just shoplifting but rmed robbery."

"Oh, I doubt that," said Charlotte.

"I don't know *how* to write a check!" oomed Pekko.

"Well," said Philip, with a little irriation, "I wrote five yesterday. To varius nonprofit organizations."

I looked to see what Pekko would say ext, but it was Charlotte who spoke. You wrote five checks yesterday?" she aid. She stood there holding the coffeeot: the decaf pot, they called it. "*When* lid you write five checks yesterday?"

"You weren't here," Philip said.

"But where *are* they?" The air in the room shifted, or stiffened.

"I mailed them."

"But we didn't talk about them," she said seriously.

"But I know what you think."

"That has nothing to do with it." Charlotte looked at Pekko. "Here is this new person—"

"It's all right, Mom, I watched him do it," Olivia broke in. "Your favorite causes."

That made Charlotte angrier. She raised her voice. "Am I invisible?" she said. "Am I nothing?" She and Philip don't fight often, but when she loses her temper she can't stop herself. At last Olivia left the room and the fight subsided, as if it had more to do with their daughter than their money. When Charlotte stopped shouting, I saw Pekko decide that we should leave, and he stood up, patting the front of his thighs energetically.

I'd been staying at his place several nights a week, and when he turned his car that way I was pleased, though I knew I should go home and clean up the baking pans. "Sweet people," he said, shaking his head sadly.

"I was afraid you'd think I was trivial or something, having friends who fight with other people around."

We were silent, driving over the Q Bridge. I looked at the harbor, the lights of ships. "You have guilt to spare," Pekko said.

"I guess." And suddenly I decided that he meant Denny. I'd thought of Denny when he spoke of young ruffians. "All that virtue," I said. "Fighting over whether to send money to Amnesty International or the A.C.L.U."

"That wasn't what they were fighting about."

"Mmm." But I didn't want to discuss Philip and Charlotte. I was finally ready to talk about my sins, to have Denny's name mentioned, to have Pekko say he considered it a little irresponsible of me to have slept with someone so young and mixed up.

"I wish I were more like them," I said. "Instead, I do things that make problems worse."

"You throw out leftovers!" Pekko said, teasing. He was looking at the road ahead, but he glanced affectionately at me for a second. "Once, I saw you toss out a jar that should have been recycled!"

"And I sleep with juvenile delinquents," I said, trying to match his tone.

"Juvenile delinquents?" He was changing lanes, a little distracted.

"One in particular," I said, looking away. I was going to like being scolded.

But instead there was a long pause, and suddenly Pekko was gripping the wheel, staring straight ahead. "Daisy," he said, "you don't mean you've been to bed with Denny?"

"You didn't know?"

"How was I to know?"

"I thought he told you—I thought you assumed. He introduced us."

"If a man introduces me to a woman, I'm supposed to assume they're sleeping together?" he said. Then he didn't say anything for a long time. "If I assumed you were sleeping with him, you think I'd start up with you?" he said at last. "Daisy, this is a very fragile"—his voice was shaking—"kid. Almost twenty years younger than you."

Oh, I cried. Pekko was more than upset, he was frantic. I thought he might drive back to New Haven in search of Denny to make sure I hadn't done him some special cynical harm. I was afraid he'd break up with me—but he didn't. He didn't break up with me, and he was so damned mature he didn't even make me miserable. We stayed at his house that night, although we didn't make love. I was wretched at what I'd done—not about the sex with Denny as much as about the telling. I thought I'd destroyed my own happiness, but I hadn't. It was the end of our headlong time, but the beginning of our seriousness. Baking a cake together had been playing house. Now, when I drove through a stop sign and caused a fender bender, I called Pekko before the cop arrived, and he came rushing from the store, not even stopping to put on a jacket, and stood beside me with that bushy beard, looking like a Biblical prophet, his shirtsleeves flapping in the wind. The cop—whom Pekko knew, somehow—continued writing me a ticket, but respectfully.

Philip said Pekko was full of shit—"Likable . . . I mean, he's wonderful. But full of shit." I guess he meant Pekko was theatrical. Charlotte (quickly over her fight with Philip) guessed that Pekko might be moody. In the next months I lived in his moods. Sometimes I'd stay at his house for a week, and then for a while I'd hardly see him.

FOR two months after Pekko and I met, I didn't see Denny. I assumed he was watching me from someplace. I didn't know if Pekko ever saw him. But when my doorbell rang late one night in October I knew it was going to be Denny and I was excited. It was raining, and Denny had rain in his eyebrows and eyelashes. I pulled him in and made tea.

"I went for a walk to think things over," he said, talking fast, "and I remembered I didn't know how your teaching was going"—as if he were the dean of faculty.

"I've been a teacher for centuries," I

said. "I am a fine and happy teacher." I was thumpy in the chest and a little trembly, setting out the Red Zinger, as if I'd been waiting for this moment, imagining it just as it was.

"How's Pekko?" he said.

"He has a cold."

"Did he go swimming?" Denny said. "It's October."

"No."

"An airborne virus," he said. Then, "Any of your students writing term papers? I thought if they wanted to write about underground figures, they could interview me."

I didn't want him to be crazy and strange. I wanted him to be someone I might reasonably have slept with, and also someone who didn't seem likely to talk about it. I thought of asking him not to, and I was tense; maybe that was why I wanted to keep him there. I did want to keep him there. I drank my tea slowly, and I started on new topics when the conversation stopped. Mostly Denny talked about my job. He thought I should refuse to go to faculty meetings or turn grades in on schedule. "Why do you put up with that?" he kept saying. His sense of injustice was overdeveloped. Maybe that happens to people who do time. I remembered that when we met he thought I'd be unjust to my students, not that somebody would be unjust to me.

"The college has to be run," I said primly. I stayed on my side of the table and we didn't talk about bed. After that, for a month or so, when I was staying at my own place, every few days I'd hear from Denny. When I was at Pekko's I didn't hear from him, and neither of us spoke of him.

The phone would ring late in the evening and Denny would say, "Take a break from marking papers." We'd meet for coffee or a drink at about midnight. He had a car now and we'd arrive in our own cars. Sometimes he'd just tell me to drive to a street corner and then he'd get into my car; we'd sit and talk there. I'd be terribly happy when he tapped on my car window. I'd reach over and pull up the lock and he'd step into the warmth, blowing on his hands. He wore a hooded sweatshirt, no coat, and the hood would be up. He'd ask me questions and tell me what he thought about everything I said, but he didn't say much about what he was doing, how he'd spent the day.

One night, in a pizza place, he said, "See that woman? See those three women together? The short one is hoping the blonde will invite her home, because the blonde has this great mother, and the other one has a thing about families. Cozy stuff."

"Did you overhear something?"

"No, I didn't overhear anything except what they ordered, which was very greasy, but I can read minds. Test me. I'll tell you your secrets. One, sometimes I bore you. Two, you're dying to know whether I'm doing anything criminal these days. Three—I know you don't just think about me—you wish you had kids."

My eyes teared up. "Are you doing anything criminal these days?"

"Yes."

"So how's Pekko?" he said, late on another night. He'd gotten me to drive out Route 80. He said he wanted a whole-wheat doughnut from a Dunkin' Donuts, and we'd stopped at several, but they didn't have whole wheat. "You can get to my grandma's this way," he said, interrupting himself.

"I don't think Dunkin' Donuts makes a whole-wheat doughnut," I said.

"Sure they do," he said. "You know why there are so many Dunkin' Donuts on Route 80? Commuters' nostalgia. People get sad, driving from city to country, country to city. Sweets are consoling."

"Denny," I said, risking his mood. "Are you on drugs?"

"Another one!" he said. I put on my turn signal. This Dunkin' Donuts didn't carry whole wheat, either. We settled for cinnamon doughnuts and milk. I asked again. "Are you?"

"The whole-wheat ones are glazed," he said. "Very nice. How about you, Daisy? Do you do drugs?"

"No."

"Did you ever?"

"I tried stuff in college," I said.

"Well, there you are. But how's Pekko? You didn't tell me if he got over his cold."

I had to think before I remembered Pekko's cold. "He's fine."

"And the store?"

"The store is fine. He works hard."

"He does. He works hard, but he's foolish," Denny said. "That store isn't secure. Have you noticed that?"

I admitted I hadn't.

"That little back window does
lock," he said. "I'm surprised, because
not an old building. I think that wind
was replaced at some point."

"What do you know about the ba
window?"

"I help," said Denny. "I've wash
that window. Anybody could climb
that window."

"Let's go, Denny, I'm tired," I sa
That night, I didn't like him muc
which alarmed me. If I wasn't spendi
time with him to please myself, I did
know why I was there.

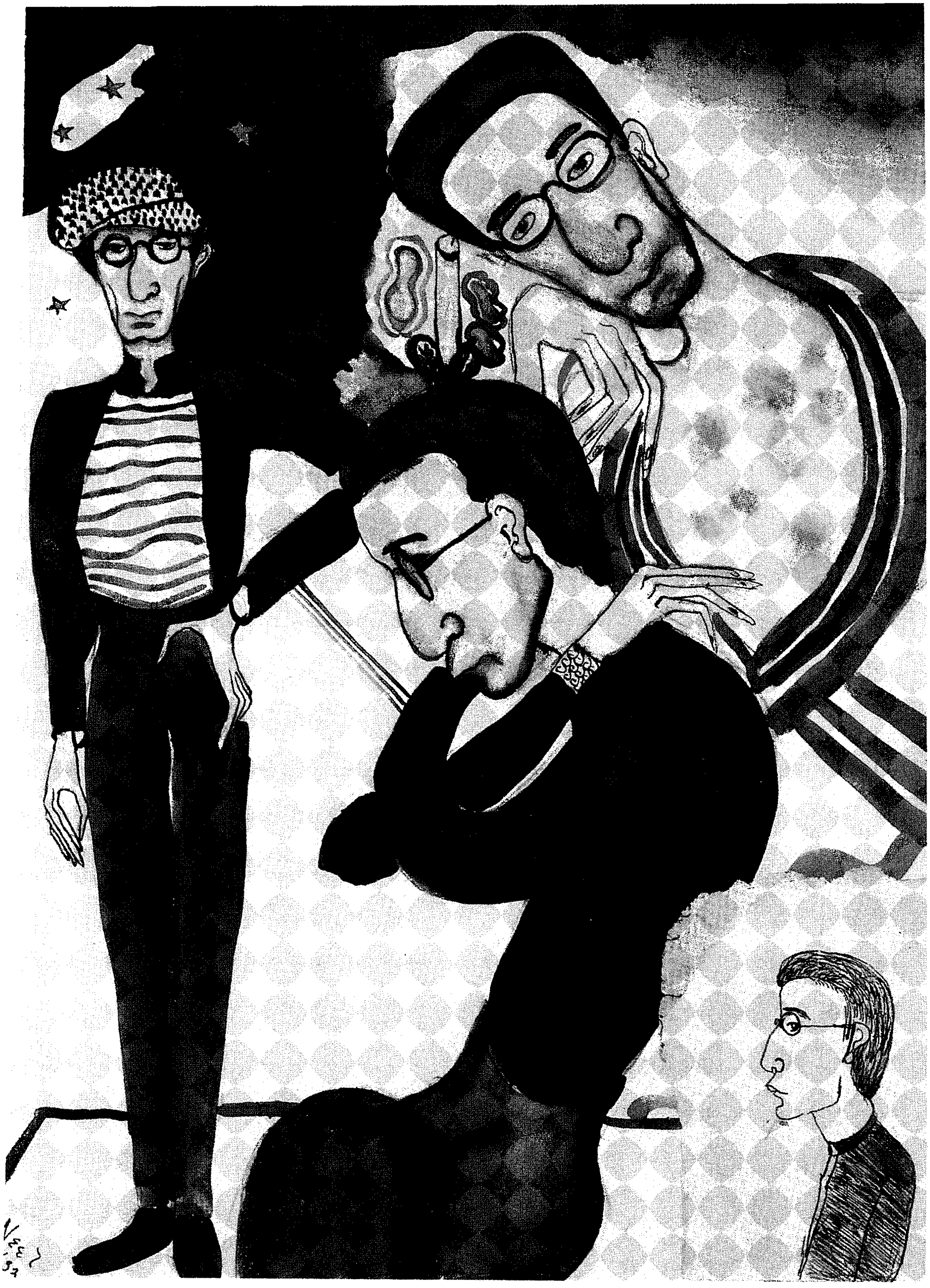
"Let's drive past my grandmother
just see if everything's O.K.," he sai

"No." I turned the car back toward N
Haven, though I liked his grandmoth
and I liked the way she looked near hi
Maybe I, too, looked that fine way, ne
Denny. Maybe, after all, it was selfis
ness that made me spend time with hi
That night, I wanted it to be selfishnes

As it grew colder I stopped hearin
from Denny. It was a cold wi
ter. I told Philip it was a relief th
Denny had disappeared from my lif
but then, in December and into Januar

ALICE'S WONDERLAN

"Christopher Lazare was the queen of the homosexuals," the painter Alice Neel (1900-84) recalled. "There was a bigger queen than he was, but I can't remember his name." In this weird 1932 portrait of a local intellectual who went on to write for The New Yorker (it could be entitled "The Four Faces of Lazare," even though all the faces are the same, melancholy and histrionic), Neel captured a seemingly eternal gay code: witness the costumey fashion (e.g., the too big, excessively patterned beret), the ornamentally delicate fingers. Her eye is sympathetic yet unwavering in its attention to unflattering details—a combination that eventually made her one of the century's best-known portraitists. Neel's paintings from the thirties, the decade after she settled in New York, can be seen at the Robert Miller Gallery, through April 12th; they exhale the grime of Depression streets, but they also hint at the exhilarating freedom a young artist might enjoy here even in the worst of times.



I'd wake in the night and drink Red Zinger—at my place or Pekko's—and remember how we'd sit in my car talking and how I'd say, "I'm starving, you want to get something to eat?" even though I wasn't starving.

When he called me again it was registration week for the spring term. "How do I sign up to go to your college?" he said.

He'd been busted for parole violation, but now he was working for a cleaning service and he was going to take courses and go straight. I thought that was good. "What do you want to take?"

"You."

"No." But he did, and there wasn't any way for me to stop him. He began to appear in our hallways in his sweatshirt, hair hanging over his eyes. He met Philip. And there he was in my Composition and Literature class. I assigned "Tell Me a Riddle," by Tillie Olsen, and he loved it, and chattered in class about the elderly people in the story. "Old people! I love old people!" Denny proclaimed. He wrote his autobiography, full of mischief. The young women fell for him, and there was I, feelings uncatalogued, seeing Pekko weekends and a couple of weeknights, too.

Denny hung around my office cubicle. "Maybe your colleagues would like to have their houses cleaned," he kept saying. Although he and his partners worked for a cleaning service, they did extra work on the side, not telling their boss, so as to be able to pocket all the money. I said, "What if the cleaning service gets mad and complains to your parole officer?"

"I don't think that will happen," he said.

"But it might."

"My parole officer would think it was wonderful," he said. "What he minds is—you know. Bank robbery. Arson."

"Dealing drugs."

"Hey, Daisy, I'm not dealing."

"Sorry."

I promised I'd ask around about cleaning, but I didn't. I did tell him he could clean my apartment, thinking he'd come with the group. But on the appointed afternoon he showed up alone. "Where are the rest of them?" I said.

"For an apartment you get only me."

And then we went to bed right away. I remember walking slowly with him to the closet where I kept the vacuum cleaner, and then we joined hands and swung our joined hands as we walked, without saying anything—like actors following stage directions—into the bedroom. He was a swift, intense, humorous lover, and when we made love I felt a strange excitement rise from him, a feeling so high-pitched it was almost a sound.

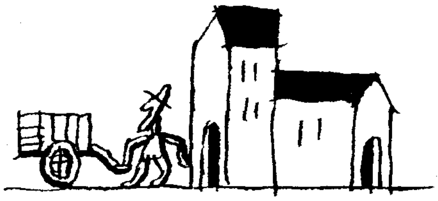
It was the first time we'd been alone together in the apartment since the night of the rain and the tea. Denny didn't clean anything—and I didn't really want him to—but he did ask me for money, which felt awful, and was new. I gave him a ten. He said he needed it for food. He wouldn't tell me where he was living.

At that time Pekko and I were talking about moving in together. My landlord raised my rent and I decided to move. That started it. Pekko didn't have room for me in his place—it was really just one big room. We had talks about geography in which the true subject was ourselves. He'd propose that we live in towns far from my job and I'd think he wanted to back out; I'd talk about downtown New Haven neighborhoods, knowing he liked the country. "I must be able to walk to an independent bookstore," I'd say. In the next weeks Denny came to clean a few more times, and, each time, we made love.

Pekko knew that Denny was in my class, and he asked me if I was sleeping with him. I said no.

"I should have known you weren't. You're not a selfish person."

"This time I'm really coming to clean," Denny would say. "I clean well," he'd tell me. "Most people don't vacuum thoroughly enough. You should push the vacuum cleaner back and forth seven times on each spot." Once, he actually did vacuum the living-room rug, leaving the vacuum cleaner in the middle of the room when we went off to bed. Each time, he asked for money, and I hated that but gave him some. A ten, a twenty. It was all hasty—a look at the vacuum cleaner, into bed, money, out the door.



Pekko wouldn't live with me. Ev place we saw had something wrong w it. I told Charlotte that Pekko was je ous of a student of mine, and she v disgusted with him. Then, the next ti I saw her—I'd been wanting badly to this—I told her that I really had sl with the student, who had come to cle my house. I spoke as if it had bee one-time thing. She was upset with She's loyal, but I knew she thought I h done something wrong.

IN the spring, I finally rented an apa ment on my own, not far from old place, and Pekko and Philip a Charlotte helped me move in. Of cou Pekko stayed on in the house on the w ter—where, in fact, he mentioned o day, he'd had Denny come and paint t rowboat. Now it was clear to me that would never give up that half-winteriz rental with the smell of salt water a the sound of wind. Meanwhile, Den finished the course and I gave him a He'd done A work for a month and half and nothing after that. At the e of the term he sometimes came to clas but he stopped hanging around my c bicle and we didn't see each other ou side of class. And then the term ende At Pekko's one evening in August—ju over a year from the day we'd met— Charlotte and Philip and both the daughters came to dinner. I'd been alon there all day, and before anyone arrive I started a fire outdoors and sat in slight breeze, in back of the house, tending it. I sat on an old kitchen chair tha had been left out all winter and was stippled by sun and salt and water. When picture myself on the chair, I, too, an mottled with weather, older and mor breakable than I know. I lean forward elbows on my bare thighs, staring at th burning charcoal and feeling its hea added to the day's heat.

Charlotte and Philip and their daughters arrived wearing bathing suits wit shirts open over them, and I was touched by that: they were so energetic and citylike I hadn't imagined them lying in the sun or going swimming off our swampy shore. Olivia and Amy did go swimming. I roasted corn. Charlotte never took off her long-sleeved shirt, and she arranged it over her thighs so she wouldn't get burned. Then the sun went down. Pekko was late, even for him. Philip ed to argue with me about oks, but I wasn't in the mood, d just agreed with everything he d. There was a bedspread and a olecloth on the grass, and we sat ere, drinking beer. It was getting rk, and cooling off. The girls ere out of the water, wrapped in wels. They went into the house change and came back. Mosquies bit us. Charlotte pulled the dspread around her like a blanet. In the twilight, the water—ong Island Sound—looked sad. I ways think that.

At last I heard Pekko's car on e other side of the house. I went to the house for the salad, and say hello to him. Pekko came to the main room, that big eatherbeaten room, and looked t me. His beard was white and ll in the dim light. I'd have rned on the light but the switch as across the room, and I had a ig bowl of salad in my hands. He oked around as if he were conused. I thought he'd forgotten e were having company. "The oPrestis are here. Remember?"

"Now I do."

"You forgot?"

"I just wasn't thinking about it."

"Why are you so late?" I said. Then, Do you feel sick?" He gestured vaguely, nd looked as if he were searching for a lace to lie down. "Would you rather eat nside?"

"Outside is fine," he said. He went outside and shook hands with Charlotte nd Philip, and Charlotte introduced im to Amy. He nodded. He picked up a bottle of beer. He said hello to Olivia.

"Shall I open your beer?" I said. "Charlotte, do you want a jacket or something?"

"Never mind," Pekko said, and sat down on the grass. He put the beer bottle beside him, ignoring it.

"You look so tired," I said.

"How are things at the store?" Charlotte said.

Pekko said, "You didn't hear anything?"

I was turning to go into the house to find a sweater for Charlotte. "About what?" I said, turning again.

"When I got to the store this morning," he said, "it had been broken into."

Of course we asked questions and exclaimed, but he shook his head. "Nothing was taken. Nothing was broken. The back window had been pried up. The alarm was turned off. But there's something else."

"What is it, Pekko—would you tell us what it is, please?" I said sharply.

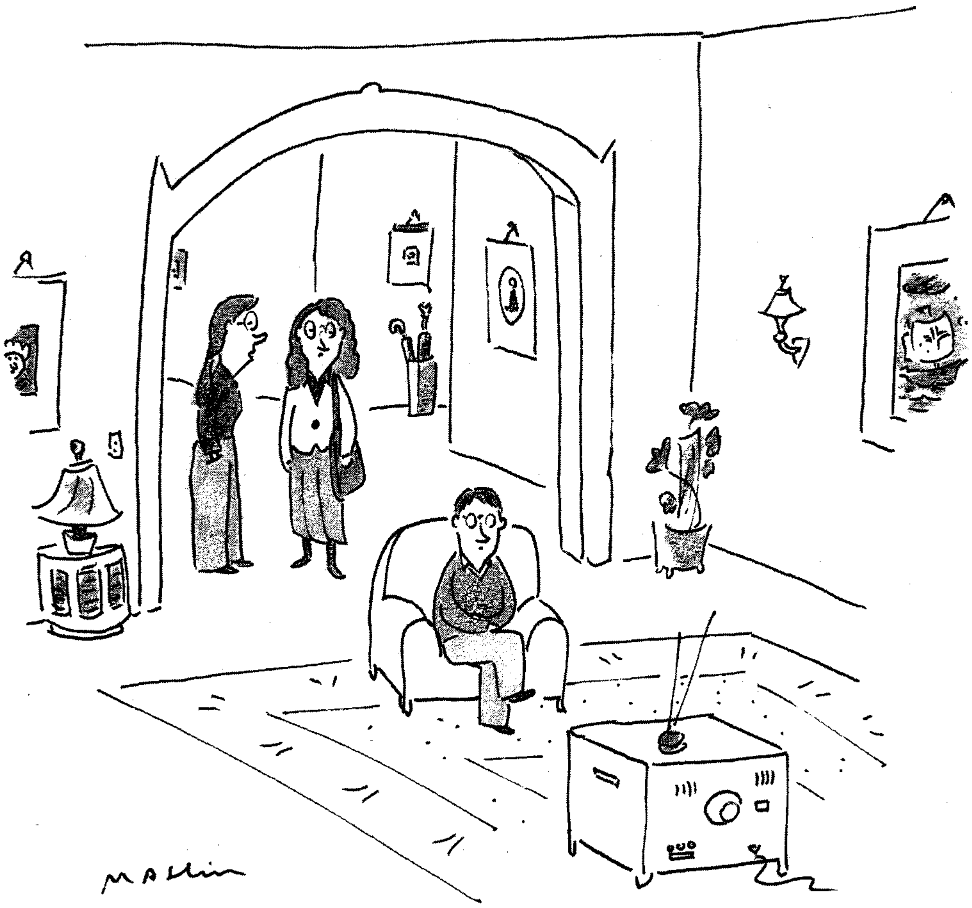
"The person who did it was Denny," he said. "He—" But then his voice went funny and he made fists of his hands in the dark and I could just see his face working behind his beard. "He's dead. He was there."

I started to scream. I've never screamed that way before or since. I was screaming for Denny and then crying, and at the same time trying to remember what each of these people knew. "Didn't you realize he was into drugs?" Pekko was saying to me.

I sensed Olivia trembling with distress near me as I sobbed. "He shot up in your store?" I heard Philip say.

"Apparently. He died of an overdose."

Somebody came and held me. It was Charlotte, and then I realized that they were all there. One of the men must have been hugging Charlotte and me, and maybe the girls, and the other man was hugging everybody. Sometimes when I think about this scene I wonder who was who, exactly, in the clutch of people. Well, we were all together in the dark, with food on plates at our feet. I wanted all of them to know the truth, and while I cried I made up my mind to tell everything, but I didn't. One by one, they went back to their places on the grass or on the bedspread, back into the dark, and someone said, "Eat, Daisy," as someone always will. Eating my dinner in silence that night, swallowing with difficulty, I thought about Denny and me, about what I couldn't have changed, and what might have been different. I looked at my own mind, but not too hard, something like the way I glanced at the taped, full cartons not yet unpacked in my new apartment, months after I'd moved. I rested a glass on those boxes now and then, but I no longer tried to remember what was in them. ♦



"Just his body remains—his spirit has moved on to HBO."

• •

ANNALS OF ROCK AND ROLL

BIG BEN

Is a fifteen-year-old guitar idol what the music industry needs?

BY JOHN SEABROOK

AT eight-forty-five on a Monday night in May, 1996, Chris Luongo arrived at CBGB, the legendary Manhattan rock-and-roll club, and saw that the long, narrow bar was packed with guys from the record business. Dressed in suits, some sporting ponytails, they had come down to the Bowery to hear a new singer-songwriter named Ben Kweller and his Texas-based band, Radish, perform the first of three Manhattan "showcases"—promotional events that a band's backers arrange in the hope of getting a record contract. Luongo, a thirty-year-old talent scout with Pure Records, got through the crowd and went to the front of the stage, where Ben was setting up. Luongo had been following the band for months, and had already listened to a three-song Radish demo tape, but, he said, "I couldn't believe that this fourteen-year-old boy was the same person who had made the music I'd heard." Ben, who looked around twelve, with smooth white skin, blond hair, and braces, was purposefully setting up his equipment, in a way that reminded Luongo of "the introspective child you might see off by himself in a playground."

But as soon as Ben began to play, Luongo said, "it was clear that he belonged onstage." Not only could he sing like a grown-up rock star, with a big hoarse voice, but he seemed to know how to move like a grown-up rock star, to execute that simple opera of rock gestures which rivets your eyes to the performer. He mostly played in the slacker-slouching-around-making-a-lot-of-noise, Kurt Cobain style, once in a while throwing in swooping axe chops with the guitar neck, or guitar-as-extension-of-penis thrusts reminiscent of Slash. The music—it sounded as if the Beatles had gone to India and instead of the maharishi had encountered Pearl Jam—brought the guys in suits forward from the bar until they were pressing against the front of the stage. The band swung into "Bedtime," which started out with Ben sounding like a little boy, singing, "I think it's past our bedtime, Let's go to sleep," in an ethereal Peter Pan voice. Then at the chorus, the rock-and-roll animal came out and roared, *"I don't understand the question!"* Whoa! What *was* the question?

After the show was over, Luongo found Ben backstage, introduced himself, and said, "God, I'd give anything to do what you just did."

Ben seemed to have reverted to his little-kid self again. He was like a boy who had been temporarily possessed by a rock star. In his sincere, adorable way, he said, "Well hey, Chris, maybe you can live vicariously through me, man!"

The next day, Luongo's boss, Arma Andon, called Dana Millman, who is in A. & R. (artists and repertoire) at Mercury Records, and told her she should catch Radish's second showcase, which was taking place that night at Coney Island High, a club on St. Marks Place. "I had heard about the age thing," she told me. "But once Ben started playing he was ageless." As Millman left the club, she took her cell phone out of her purse and called Mercury's president, Danny Goldberg—a well-known figure in the rock-and-roll business, who has worked, over the last two decades, with epoch-making bands like Led Zeppelin, Sonic Youth, and Nirvana—at his town house in the Village. "Which I never do," Millman said later, "because Danny's a family man. I said, 'Danny, you *have* to see this kid play tomorrow night.' "

Goldberg said, "Dana, I'm putting my kids to sleep!"

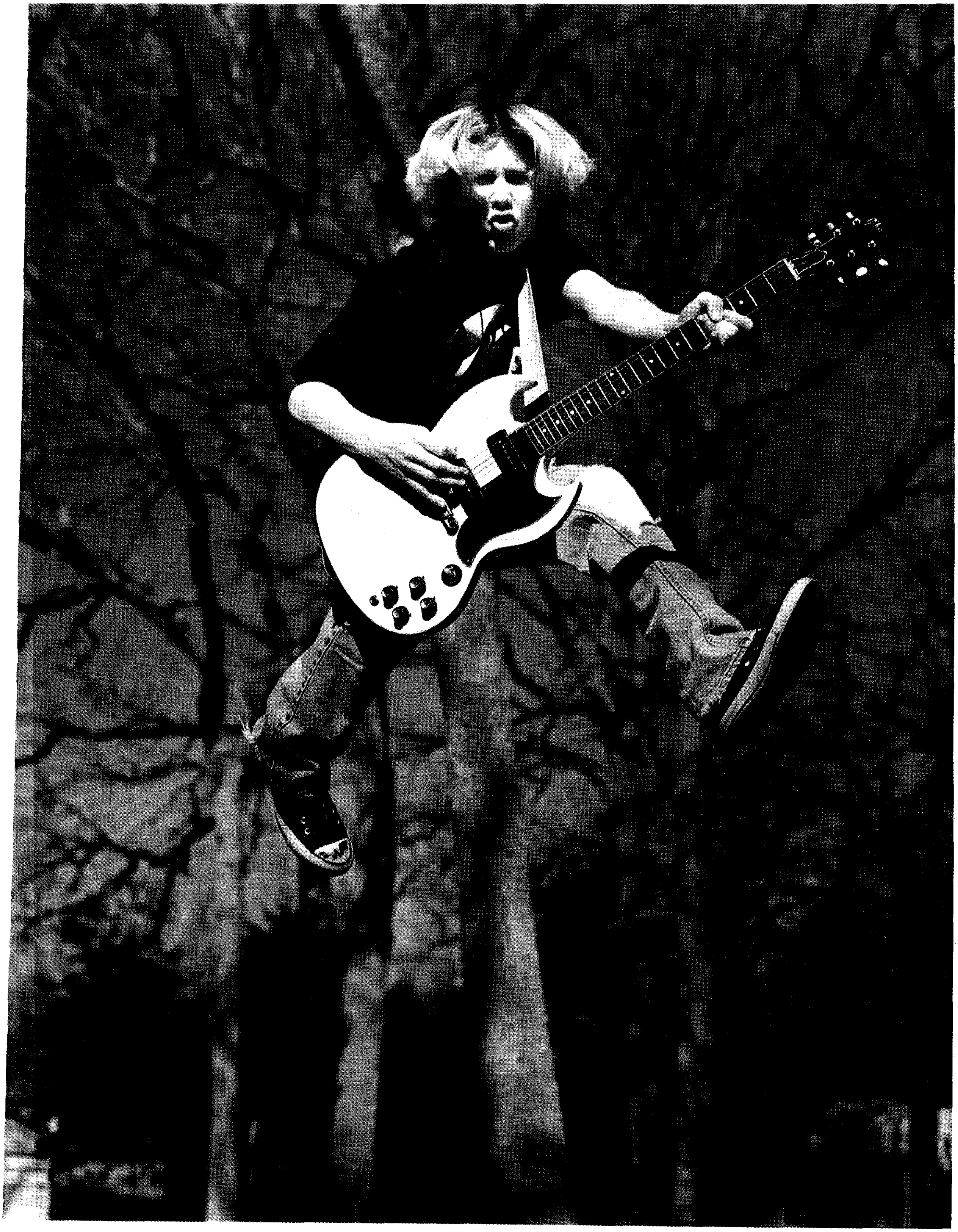
"I said, 'Danny, just promise me you'll see this band tomorrow.' "

So the next night Goldberg, a lanky forty-six-year-old, with modishly wavy hair and Buddy Holly glasses, went to Don Hill's, which is on Greenwich Street at Spring, where the Canal Bar used to be, for Radish's final showcase. By now, the buzz about the band had spread to other labels, and the crowd that night contained a substantial proportion of the middle-aged men who control the rock-and-r industry: Seymour Stein, of Elektra; Ch Blackwell, of Island Records; the pr ducer Don Was. Ben put on his rockin est show yet, performing a move that mo rock stars are too old to do these days: a fl ing, mid-riff leap off the stage, which capped by playing an electric serenade f a tableful of top music-industry lawye

"You can find songs that rock but do have good melodies," Goldberg told n later. "And you can find songs with goo melodies that don't rock, but it's rare th you find both. Ben was up there wi braces and this angelic face, but the son were finished adult compositions." H added, "There was a youthfulness, a jo ousness, about Ben that was very exciting At the same time, the music didn't cha lenge any assumptions about what roc and roll should be. It was safely "altern tive," which is to say mainstream, an would fit easily into preëxisting college grunge and alternative-radio formats. Th was good, because, for all the rebellio that rock music suggests, the rock indus try is a remarkably conservative business

After the show at Don Hill's, Roge Greenawalt, the producer who had or chestrated the showcases, led Ben and th boys—John Kent, the sixteen-year-ol drummer, and Bryan Blur, twenty-eight who plays bass—down into the club' cruddy basement, in an attempt to shelter them a little from the almost tangibl waft of greed on the floor. But Mercur sent a scout down there anyway, and the were invited to come to Goldberg's office the following morning. There, on a hig floor in Eighth Avenue's Worldwid Plaza, with astounding views of Manhattan, Goldberg went into his selling mode.

WITHIN a week, fourteen different labels were participating in a major bidding war for Radish. People in the industry were saying "Don't you just *lov* Ben?" to others who had met him. And Ben *was* lovable, in his sweetness and



Before Ben Kweller and his band, Radish, performed at the CBGB showcase in New York, they had played mostly at school dances and coffee shops. Within a week, fourteen labels were in a major bidding war for them. Photograph by Max Vadukul.

his boyish purity, in the way he said, "I love you, man," with such openness, in the way he was quick to hug you, and the way he seemed to drink you in. It's a little weird to have a fourteen-year-old tell you, "Hey, you're cool, man," and to feel a thrill, but such is the power that Ben has over aging hipsters. He is like the boy whom the hipster tries to keep alive inside himself, the idealized boy who somehow has to remain alive if you hope to remain in touch with your soul, and also with your market.

For Ben, a shy, unathletic kid who had never been particularly popular in school, all this attention was"pretty surreal," he told me. "I'd just smile and nod and say, 'Thank you very much.' " The great beast Celebrity, swinging its Cyclops eye across the cultural savanna, had suddenly trained all its attention on him. Ben's parents, the Kwellers—his father, Howie, is a G.P. at Presbyterian Hospital in Greenville, Texas, and his mother, Dee, has a degree in counselling—were startled to find themselves with a rock star under their roof. The offers that were coming in for their son represented more money than either Howie or Dee would see in one place in their lifetime: two and a half million dollars for a kid no one had heard of, with a band that had played mostly at school dances and coffee shops. (Under the terms of the deal they eventually worked out, Ben, who won't have full access to his money until he turns eighteen, is said to have got seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars as a signing bonus for the band, and a "three firm" record deal; that is, three records, whether or not the label releases them, plus a very healthy royalty rate, of the kind that top bands like U2 get, and—unheard of for an unproven talent—creative control. In addition, Ben signed a music-publishing contract worth $1.2 million.) Dee told me, "We said to him, 'Now, Ben, you're sure you don't want to finish high school and college before you start this?' But Ben didn't want to wait. He feels like he's been waiting all his life. How can you tell a fourteen-year-old to wait six years? He said it's his destiny, and I truly believe that. The time is now. The songwriting is there, and it can't wait anymore." Yes, there were lots of girls and drugs and alcohol around the rock scene, "but we have tried to give Ben good values about that. Like with Kurt Cobain, who is one of Ben's heroes. We said, 'Now, Ben, it's O.K. to respect Kurt's music, but you can't respect what Kurt did with his life.' And Ben said, 'I know that.' "

Ben's youth, of course, was part of what made him such a desirable commodity. One of the lessons that the men who run the rock industry have learned from the unexpected success of Alanis Morissette, the only rock idol that the business has managed to produce in the last two years (her album "Jagged Little Pill" has now sold more than fifteen million copies), is that the kids who buy records don't want to hear thirty-year-old rockers singing about their problems; they want stars closer to their own age. Who better to speak to teen-age longings than a rock star who was just about to turn fifteen? Ross Elliot, a scout for Viacom's Famous Music, which bought the publishing rights to Ben's music, told me, "All of us in the music business fucked up. We kept throwing alternative bands at these kids, and they couldn't relate to it and started buying rap instead. But Ben *is* the audience. What's coming out of Ben is raw shit. 'Apparition of Purity'!" Elliot exclaimed, referring to one of Ben's songs. "That's not coming from a jaded place." He made a gesture toward his own chest. "That's coming from a pure place. Ben is honest. He's so young he can afford to be honest. All this stuff people write songs about, like why does love have to be so sad—that stuff is happening to Ben right now."

In June, Roger Greenawalt, Howie, and the band went to L.A. to meet with label people. Madonna invited them to her house for lunch and very nearly persuaded Howie and Ben to sign with her label, Maverick. While they were hanging out, Anthony Kiedis, of the Red Hot Chili Peppers, drove up on his motorcyle. ("He just *happened* to drop by," Ben told me.) The following day, a white limousine pulled up in front of the Kwellers' hotel and took them up the Pacific Coast Highway to Malibu, where they visited Jimmy Iovine, the head of Interscope Records, in his princely villa, which occupies a few acres along the Pacific, right next to Danny Goldberg's villa. Iovine was having a middleweight-championship fight beamed in by means of some fancy satellite hookup, and he had invited a few friends over to watch it—Axl Rose, Tom Petty, Joe Strummer, and Dr. Dre. For Howie, who is forty-five, it was as if he had died and gone to the H Rock Café in Heaven. He grew up in era when rock stars and their fans w connected only by a few hard-to-find f zines—when the secret of how Jim Page fretted his guitar to make that sou in "Whole Lotta Love" was a kind of cult knowledge, possessed only by the t faithful. But Ben, as a child of mod media, knew exactly how to be c around rock stars like these.

While everybody was chilling, son one brought out a guitar and passed it Petty, who made up a song about "Jim Iovine and his football fields of green" an allusion to a regular touch-footb game that various rock stars and label gu used to play together in L.A., until th wives made them stop because they we getting too old and were coming home i jured. "Then he passes the guitar to J Strummer," Greenawalt told me, "and e erybody goes, 'Joe! Play "London Callin Joe!' And Joe says, 'Fuck you! I'm not pla ing "London Calling!" ' And then he pla it. And then Joe says, 'Here, kid, catc and flings the guitar into the air in the d rection of Ben, who is sitting like twent five feet across the room. The guitar flo in the air over Iovine's million-dollar gla coffee table and priceless tchotchkes, b Ben stands up and calmly catches it, si down, and plays a couple of his song And when he was done those guys real gave it up for him."

In the end, Danny Goldberg's rel tionship with Kurt Cobain (Goldberg wa Nirvana's manager and Cobain's frien was what helped carry the day for Me cury. Goldberg even had Courtney Lo give Ben a call. "I pick up the phon and there's this chick on the other en who doesn't say who she is, she just star talking really fast," Ben told me. "Like *really* fast, saying that she heard my song and really liked them and on and on, until finally I figure out that it's Courtne Love I'm listening to. Dude, like I don' even know how she breathes she talks s much. I guess it's like being a bagpip player—you got to learn to breath through your nose."

GOLDBERG wanted Radish to build u a local following around Dalla prior to the release of the band's first album, "Restraining Bolt," which will appear in record stores on Tuesday, Apri 22nd. He felt that Radish should be from Texas—from somewhere real, and not jus from the music industry, like a nineties

sion of the Monkees. Ben's youth, af-
all, could be a liability if the industry's
erest in it was perceived as a despera-
reflex, as another in a recent series of
ns that the rock-and-roll business was
trouble: underwhelming sales by estab-
ıed bands like R.E.M. and Hootie and
Blowfish; boring pop music by newer
ts like Celine Dion and No Doubt;
d no format changes on the hori-
n to boost sales the way CD technol-
y did. Already, the Dallas *Morning*
ews had done a story in which a re-
rter went to hear Radish in a local
ıb and noticed all the middle-aged
en with ponytails and Armani glasses
ting around at the back of the bar.

On a Saturday night in late January,
adish was to play two gigs in the Deep
llum section of Dallas. Ben told me
was planning to take a nap between
gs, but that didn't seem likely. He was
tting on his bed in his bedroom. John,
ıe drummer, was lying on the floor
ith his hands behind his head; Bryan,
ıe bass player, whom the boys call
rain because he went to college and
nows so much, was leaning against the
all. Ben's bedroom was maybe a bit
eater than usual; his mother had made
im clean it up for my arrival. Ben, who
a "Star Wars" fan ("Restraining Bolt"
an allusion to the scene in which
uke fits R2D2 with a restraining bolt,
o that the little droid won't run away),
ad all three "Star Wars" posters on his
valls, along with a big poster of Kurt and
n even bigger poster of the lead singer
rom Weezer.

I was sitting at Ben's desk, where he
upposedly does his schoolwork. Ben has
ttention-deficit disorder, which makes
ıim a slow reader. He can barely spell and
an't write, except in the most childish,
artoonlike scrawl, and he also has diffi-
ulty conceptualizing in numbers. He has
een "home-schooled" by his mother since
sixth grade. He had his mouth open a lit-
tle bit, and his head tilted back, so that he could see out from under his bleached-blond hair, which still showed the effects of some green dye he had put into it when the band was parentless in New York, mixing "Restraining Bolt" at the Sony studios, on West Fifty-fourth Street. (John dyed his hair orange, and Bryan dyed his blue.) Dee had told me earlier that it cost her almost a hundred dollars to get the green dye out when Ben got back to Greenville.

The phone rang, and Ben checked his Caller I.D. device. "Oh, it's my sister," he said, referring to his older sister, Heidi, who lives in an apartment in Dallas. He picked up the phone. "Cool. She says we're on Q102 right now." He turned on the radio. The early chords of "Dear Aunt Arctica," his song about church burning and pornography, were heard. Ben crooned "*Duuude*" softly. (He speaks a little like Tonto: not much variation in the vocabulary but a terrific range of inflections in key words, and no word does more work than "dude." There's the expansive, come-with-me-my-comrade-to-the-ramparts "DOODE!"; the bluesy, empathetic "Duuude"; and the bleak, fatalistic "dud.")

The song rocked. But the ferocity of the sound coming out of the radio contrasted strangely with the frail-seeming boy standing next to it.

"It's weird not to have to press 'play,' " Ben said.

John, who doesn't say much, smiled his dreamy smile.

When the song was over, Ben went downstairs and joined Howie in his study. Howie was surfing the Web, grabbing maps for the band's upcoming trip to Fayetteville, Arkansas. "What a great Web site! This stuff is dynamite!" he exclaimed. Ben sat in front of the TV and played the new sixty-four-bit Nintendo "Star Wars" game, Shadows of the Empire, which he was very skilled at. After executing a series of death-defying runs along a deep canyon and wasting some imperial guards, he finally got to the jet pack that would take him to Boba Fett, but he missed the takeoff ledge and fell to his death. Howie, without looking away from *his* screen, said, "When we go on tour, Ben, we're going to need Nintendo in the bus."

Howie played drums in a rock band when he was Ben's age, but his own dreams of being a rock star were put aside when he went to the University of Maryland and then to medical school at Mount Sinai. He has an unusual professional relationship with his son: he

"Great parents—genetic?"

• •

is Radish's manager, and will be Ben's legal guardian until Ben is eighteen and can slip his own restraining bolt. Howie managed the band alone for a year, but in the process of gearing up for a national tour, which will follow the release of the album, he was looking to hire some professionals. That night, Warren Entner, who manages Nada Surf and Failure, was coming from L.A. to be vetted by the Kwellers.

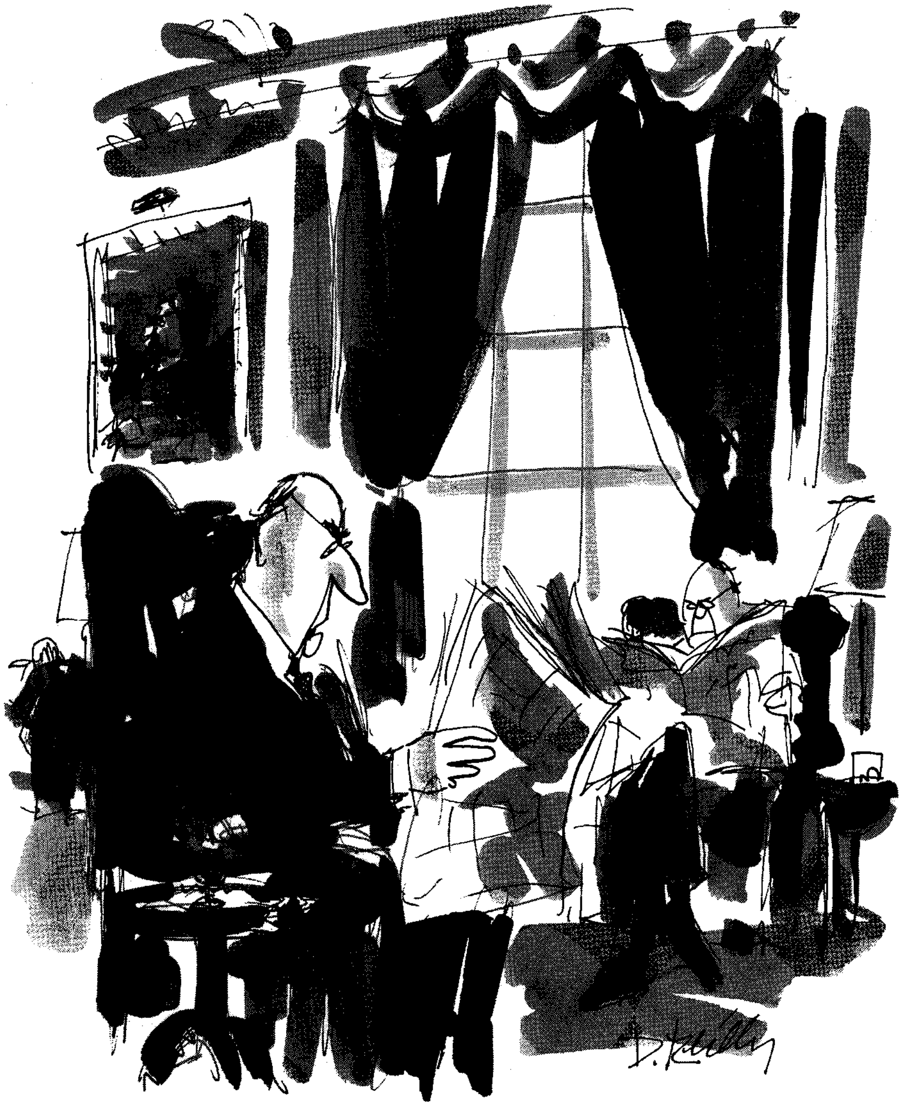
A sense of enchantment hovers over the Kweller household—a feeling that, while everyone should try to carry on with life as usual, everyone secretly knows that reality is going to change completely any day now. Howie is planning to scale back his medical practice, and Dee will be going on the road with the band as John and Ben's tutor. This sense of life turned topsy-turvy is especially strong in the Kwellers' living room, which doubles as Radish's rehearsal space. It is conservatively decorated—standard furniture, a baby grand, Judaica paintings on the walls—except that the boys' instruments are sitting in the middle of it. Sawdust from John's wild thrashing of the drums has collected in a small pile on the Persian rug.

A tapping sound drew me into the kitchen—it was Ben's ten-year-old sister, Abby, madly practicing her steps for tap class. Dee, also in the kitchen, said that Ben's success had been a little hard on Abby, who, as the baby of the family, was used to getting all the attention. We went into the living room and talked about Ben's brand-new song, "Panamanian Girl," which he had just finished the day before. Dee said that it was about Ben's girlfriend, Emileigh, whose grandmother is from Panama, and who is the first real girlfriend that Ben has had. When, after a few weeks, Emileigh dumped Ben her old boyfriend, a football player w was seventeen and could drive, "Ben v really upset," Dee said. She made a s clown face and drew tear tracks on l cheeks with her fingers. But before lo the Panamanian Girl dumped the jc and got back together with Ben. No Dee said, Ben was bummed because Jo was going out with Emileigh's ninetee year-old sister. Dee was looking forwa to listening to Ben's new song tonigl and maybe gleaning some more inform tion about the relationship.

Ben, who seemed to be keeping eye on his mother to make sure she did say anything too embarrassing abo him, came into the living room and s at the drum set. I asked him how he f about John dating his girlfriend's sist

Ben groaned, "Duuude, it's weird, lil I go over to her house and *he's* there. N wonder I'm so fucked up."

"You're not fucked up, Ben!" h mother said. "And don't say 'fuck.' "



"The world moves so fast nowadays. It used to take years and years to become a confirmed horse's ass."

WHETHER Ben is truly a rock savant or just a talented kid wh has been thrust into the role of roc star more or less by accident is the subject of some debate among people in th industry who have spent time with hi recently. Roger Greenawalt, who wa himself a guitar prodigy in the early seventies, told me, "When I met Ben, I sai to myself, This is terribly interestin because he's the strangest prodigy I'v ever known. Most musical prodigies obsess about *playing*. It's all about you an your relationship with your instrumen Ben is obsessed not with playing but wit songwriting, singing, and, above all, *acting* like a rock star." But Paul Kolderie who, with his partner, Sean Slade, remixed "Restraining Bolt," and spent tw weeks with the band in Boston, vigorousl rejected the notion that Ben is any kin of prodigy. "He's just a talented, brigh kid who has watched a lot of MTV," Kolderie said. "When we were kids, yo know, if you wanted to be a rock sta you could watch 'Don Kirshner's Rock Concert' on Friday night, or 'In Concert,' and that was it. Today, rock stars are on TV twenty-four hours a day. There are constant cues on how to look and act like a rock star, and the kid is smart and he picked up on them. To some extent, he's aping them, but he's a quick learner."

Ross Elliot, of Famous Music, says he thinks that Ben, who can't read music y well, is an intuitive musical gen- . and to illustrate this he told me the ry of having Ben over to his house in nhattan with six or seven older mu- ans. "These were serious musicians, ht, guys in their twenties and thir- ;, and we were up on my roof trying figure out Beatles songs," Elliot said. en would say, 'Oh yeah, here it is, ı invert that, and that's a G-sharp di- nished fifth'—not taking the easy way t, you know, but getting the chord pro- essions exactly right, the passing ords and everything. And doing it all ear! These other musicians were t staring at him, going, Who is this l?" Elliot added that Ben displayed ecocious gifts in another area that's portant for a rock star: attracting od-looking women. One night, Elliot ok Ben and a band of adult guys to eak Night at Don Hill's, where there s the usual complement of beautiful enty-five-year-olds. "Those other guys dn't stand a chance," Elliot said. "This e girl came up to me and said, 'So, hat's going on with Ben later?' By the d of the evening, it was just Ben sit- g at the table with these six beauti- l chicks, who were all totally into him."

Ben is certainly a gifted songwriter. e has been writing songs for as long as can remember. "I'd write songs with love you' and with a girl in them," he ld me. "I had no idea what love was. I st knew, from listening to the Beatles d Beach Boys songs my parents were ways playing, that songs were supposed have love and a girl in them." Among is earliest rock-and-roll memories is e time, in 1985, when Bruce Spring- een came to Dallas on the "Born in e U.S.A." tour and played in the Cot- n Bowl. Ben was four. The Boss's then uitarist, Nils Lofgren, who was an old iend of Howie's from Bethesda (Lof- ren had once played the accordion in a and that Howie started), got the Kwel- ers tickets and backstage passes. They net the Boss, who was so charmed by Ben that he let him stay on the stage luring the concert. Ben bounced around o the music for a while, then climbed p onto one of the huge speakers that the ocals were blasting out of and fell asleep. 'The vibration was sort of soothing," e told me. "It was like being in the car."

After the concert, Ben started to imi- ate Bruce and Nils. Dee said, "He would ump around the house the way Nils did when he was playing rock and roll, saying, 'I'm Nils! Hey, I'm Nils!' " Like many children with attention-deficit disorder, Ben was an uncanny and relentless mimic. He would see the mailman; then he would *be* the mailman. "He could never role-play without acting out the whole part," Dee said. Ben told me, "I would be like ten different people in a day, like a different person every hour. I had all these costumes in my room, and I'd change my clothes constantly." When he was ten, Nirvana's album "Nevermind" appeared, and he saw Kurt Cobain for the first time, in the video of "Smells Like Teen Spirit." Suddenly, the Beatles made sense to him. "When Nirvana came out, it was like, Yes! This is the Beatles except with the guitars turned up." Ben started to look like Kurt—like the too-sweet-for-this-world little boy Kurt once was.

He began taking piano lessons when he was six; his teachers criticized him for changing the chords around in songs like "Heart and Soul" and "Let It Snow," until finally one of them realized that this was actually a sign of creativity, not of disobedience, and informed the Kwellers that their son had some sort of unique talent. He started playing his dad's guitar when he was twelve, taught a neighbor kid to play the drums, and briefly formed a band called Green Eggs and Ham. Later, Ben hooked up with a bass player, and in January, 1994, John joined as drummer. A few months after that, Ben got his own guitar, and in June the group débuted at Ben's bar mitzvah. They called themselves Radish. The boys had looked among the gnarly-sounding diseases in Howie's medical dictionary for another band name, but in the end "Radish" came from a kid named Arosh, whom Ben met at a party. "He was like an Indian or something," Ben told me. "I said 'Whoa, DOODE! Your name is Arosh? Hey, man, do you mind if I call you Radish?' He said, 'No, man, that's cool.' " Howie and David Kent, John's father, thought the band sounded pretty good. They made a tape, and Howie sent it to Lofgren, who saw to it that it got into the hands of his producer, Roger Greenawalt.

GREENAWALT had once been the best fourteen-year-old rock-guitar player in *his* county, and he, too, wanted to be a rock star. He came close during the New Wave early eighties, when he had an Eno/Bowie-style band called the Dark, in Boston, and was recording and per-

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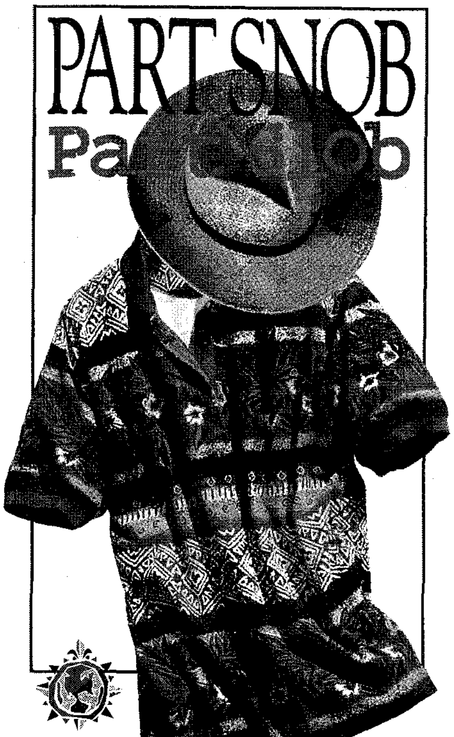

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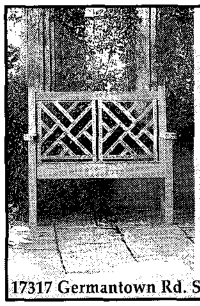

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DINNER

Candlelight burnishes
her plum sweater.

An odalisque, an ode, a no.
An Eskimo.

Gray eyes partly crossed.
Pregnant.
One tooth wasn't perfect in the front.

Grieg's small coins are thrown

from a bag filled
with yellow leaves.

—WILLIAM BENTON

forming music with Ric Ocasek, of the Cars. But ultimately, he told me, "I failed." He wound up as a session guitarist and is now mostly a producer. Insofar as it's possible to be precise about what someone like Greenawalt does in the rock business, which is a tangled web of connections involving promoters, producers, scouts, managers, and A. & R. people, you could say that he looks for new talent, works with it, and then tries to sell it to a label for a finder's fee and an "override," or what is known in the movie business as points.

Greenawalt liked the tape of Radish "within thirty seconds," he told me. "You could tell the kid was good at music. I called Howie, and he was very excited, very solicitous—he and Dee treated me like a rock star. So I flew down there to see if they had the capacity to do the work at the professional level I would require." He ended up staying with the Kwellers off and on for two months, working with Ben and John for eight to ten hours a day on their music. (Bryan wasn't hired by the band until later, just before the New York showcases.) "We took apart every song, every lyric, every chorus, and I made Ben justify its existence," Greenawalt said. He tried to make Ben more aware of his body, because "rock is as much visual as auditory. People take in a lot of it with their eyes. A rock star has to play with his whole body."

He also taught Ben that for the rock star nothing exists outside the moment. Every aspect of his performance—how he plays, how he sings, how he stands—must communicate the feeling that this m ment is a totally satisfying experience. would say, 'Ben, what's your favor meal? O.K., let's have it right now. Wh your favorite color? O.K., let's paint right now. What is the chord you're pl ing—why are you playing it? Does it f good to lift your arms over your hea Greenawalt jumped up, bowed his he closed his eyes, and slowly raised h arms—expertly transforming himself in Roger Daltrey or Peter Frampton onsta with the light streaming past him.

We were talking in Greenawalt's apar ment, which is on the ground floor of building on West Eighty-third Street. was a cold winter night, the lights we low, candles were burning, music w playing, and Greenawalt's girlfriend, Ji whose face and posture announced "I a model," was sitting next to him on th couch. Apparently, Greenawalt spent lot of time on his couch; books we stacked high in front of it. He told m several times how happy he was, livin what he called "the life"—the rock-and roll life. He is one of a breed of grown ups whose success seems to rest on the ability to stay loose, listen to music a day, and make you feel that the nigh could go on forever. "The perfect care is like the perfect crime," Greenawa said. "I've got the beautiful girl on th couch next to me while I sit here sip ping Macallan Scotch and telling m story to you, and that's *fine*."

I could easily imagine Howie and De sharing moments of parental concern ove just exactly what this slightly voluptuous

ely licentious-seeming character was
g in their house, with his cigarettes
his black jeans, having what Green-
lt described to me as a "platonic love
r" with their son, and instructing
in the spirit of rock and roll, which
enawalt traces back beyond Jagger
Chuck Berry—to Oscar Wilde, com-
rs like Mahler and Liszt, and the Ro-
tic poets. But Howie realized that
enawalt had both the musical skills
the connections to make something
pen for Radish. "Roger took us there,"
wie told me.

'I taught Ben that he was not Kurt
ain," Greenawalt went on. "I said,
ok, Kurt was a miracle. An absolute
acle. And this is not about being a
d star, either. It's not a David Cas-
vibe, it's a Jodie Foster vibe. The cul-
e may pay attention to us because
re young, O.K., fine, but we can't *be*
ng. We have to compete with this' "—
gestured with his cigarette toward the
eo, which was playing U2's "Achtung
y"—" 'and with Beck and Pavement.' "
took a drag on the cigarette and looked
into the visionary middle distance.
lon't know. Maybe Ben will be Shir-
Temple." He focussed on me again.
nd that's cool. Shirley Temple is a good
e."

Jill said she needed to get ready for her
etry class at the New School, but would
like cheeseburgers before she went? As
was fixing the food in the kitchen,
eenawalt said to me, "Live large, but be
all. The small reality—that was Ben's
d my motto."

He got up from the couch and hit "re-
y" on the CD controls, and we listened
ain to Bono, one of the great rock stars,
ging "One":

Is it getting better?
Or do you feel the same?

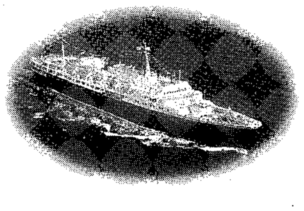
he electric guitar seemed to be showing
possible escape from the blues in the
usic, pointing the way toward a place
here there was "One love, One life . . .
ne need in the night. . . ." While lots of
ople can play at being rock stars, very
w have the genius to work within the
gid conventions of contemporary rock
d yet manage to transcend them and
tually say something. This was a song
u *had* to listen to again if you heard
once. Compared to this, Ben was just
riting about homework and crushes.
laybe some fifteen-year-olds would re-
te to it, but there wasn't much of a message that anyone older than fifteen could take from his songs. Indeed, the lust for Radish is one way of measuring how far the rock industry has moved from caring about whether songs have any message at all. If Ben were left alone to develop his talent for eight more years, maybe play around local clubs and release a CD with a small label, his music might develop into something great. If he really is a genius, it may anyway, but being coöpted by the industry so early in his career sets the bar that much higher. "The best thing that could happen to Ben," one industry insider told me, "is that the album doesn't sell and he gets all embittered, and then, when he's eighteen, he can really write something good."

AFTER a month of work, Greenawalt took the band to a studio in Baltimore and recorded a three-song demo tape. "I had already been feeding smart bombs to people in the industry, so the anticipation was high," he told me. A well-known music-industry lawyer, Jonathan Ehrlich, of Grubman, Indursky & Schindler, put his own network of connections at Ben's service in return for a piece of the action. In April, Greenawalt booked the showcases and brought Radish to New York. Ben and John crashed here in his apartment. Ehrlich represented the band in the record deal, for which he received a percentage. Howie, as the band's manager, got a flat fee, as did John. Greenawalt got sixty thousand dollars for his work with the band, and points on "Restraining Bolt," which he recorded in July and mixed in August.

But when Ben listened to the album he didn't like the way it sounded. It had the finished, shiny, instrumental, studio-produced sound that was popular in the early eighties. (It was not unlike the album that Greenawalt never quite got around to making himself.)

"When we heard it, we were like, dud, that's New Wave," Ben told me. "I said, 'My friends are going to eat me up for this.' " He tried to discuss his reservations about the album with Greenawalt, but Greenawalt acted like "an egomaniac," Ben said. "We would suggest something, and Roger would say, 'How many records have you made? You're just a kid.' He treated me like a kid."

Ben shared his misgivings with Danny Goldberg, and Goldberg agreed with him. "I thought it was two-thirds of a great album," Goldberg told me. The al-



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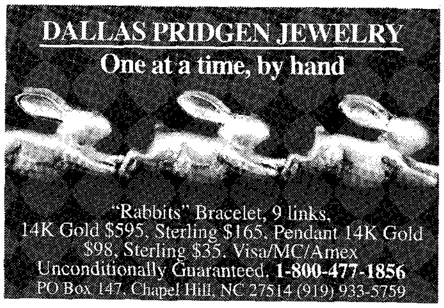

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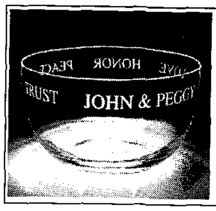

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bum was taken away from Greenawalt and given to Kolderie and Slade, who recorded three new songs, rerecorded one, and remixed the others, adding the crushing guitar sound that is the alternative signature. In the process, Ben and Roger stopped speaking to each other, and they haven't spoken since.

I asked Greenawalt if he thought that Ben manipulated grownups into helping him realize his ambitions—if his sweet-little-boy persona was really just a con to get jaded hipsters to fall in love with him. Greenawalt answered, somewhat cryptically, "You never know when you're going to meet the smartest person you've ever met, and you never know how old he's going to be." I asked him how he felt about Ben's taking the album away from him, and he said, "I think it's *charming* that Ben rebelled against me. Charming. He was my best student ever, and so of course his final act as my student had to be to rebel against me." He took another sip of Scotch. "I taught him well," he added.

Greenawalt hunted around among the books at the base of the couch and came up with a large black folder. He said, "This is something from Tacitus, which I wrote in my commonplace book yesterday: 'It is so much easier to repay injury than to reward kindness, for gratitude is regarded as a burden, revenge as a gain.' "

ON the way to the gig in Dallas, John drove the sixty miles from Greenville very fast. The roadies—at this stage still mainly Howie and John's father, David—tried to follow in David's Suburban, which was pulling a U-Haul trailer carrying the instruments and the sound equipment.

A woman from Mercury was in the car with us, and Ben asked her what new alternative-rock acts were out there. She said, "Well, there's Morphine."

"Cool! Morphine," Ben said. "We love them, man."

"No, dude, that's Codeine we love," said Brain.

"Duuude, you're right."

John said, "This car back here is bugging me," and I saw a shard of his handsome face in the rearview mirror, looking backward.

BRIAN SAVAGE

"There goes the last of our knee-jerk liberals."

Ben: "Give 'em the finger, dude."

John, bored: "I don't have the ene But his eyes lit up as an old Bad C pany song came on—a song I was ening to on the radio with the same thusiasm when I was seventeen, in 1 For the first time in the history of and roll, parents and children are int same music. The rock industry beli this is evidence that its music will g forever, but it could just as easily be t as a sign that the whole enterprise is d dent and is due to be swept away soo a genuinely youth-based sound. I Goodman, in "The Mansion on the H his new book about the rock indu dates the birth of rock music as we k it today—which he sees as a synthes the electric-pop sound of the Beatles the acoustic, message-based traditio folk music—to Bob Dylan's perforn "Like a Rolling Stone" with an elec guitar at the Newport Folk Festiva 1965. Although rock has since evol through metal, punk, New Wave, anc ternative rock, and is now tentati commingling with hip-hop, in bands the Fugees, there hasn't been a revolut quite as all-transforming as the one cau by Dylan at Newport in '65. In footag that famous day, you can see the crc going wild: the folkies booing, beca Dylan was selling out to the commerc mainstream interests of rock; the inc ient rockers cheering madly, for he finally, was a way of taking the sens pleasure of electric-guitar music and m rying it to a message. The kind of r and roll that Radish would be playing night was basically the nineteenth ite tion of that sound.

Other bands on the radio: the Car gans, Bush, Stone Temple Pilots. All exemplars of the basic problem with t rock business, which is that innovat musicians, like the grunge bands th emerged in the early nineties, are suck up into the commercial mainstream a imitated at ever greater speeds, to feed t Jabba the Hutt-like appetite of the E tertainment State—the megalopoly entertainment products which is gro ing around the globe, coöpting everyon (One of the few musicians who could r sist the suction was Kurt Cobain, and l did it by killing himself.) The rock bus ness is about selling the edge, but edge, l definition, has to lie slightly outside th mainstream. And the same mechanis that hoovers the hip into the mainstrea makes the kids especially sensitive to fake hip, and that, in turn, creates the ıliar anxiety of the rock-and-roll busi- ıman. Like the Puritans, who had to ry about being found not to possess :e, the rock businessman has to worry ut being shown to lack hip.

ohn, who was station-surfing, stopped Nirvana's "Come As You Are":

don't have a gun.
lo I *don't* have a gun.

I said that it was weird how many of t's songs have guns in them. Ben said, hink he was always planning to kill iself, and he was thinking about it, and ng to tell people, but no one around ı stopped him."

I said, "Danny Goldberg was around ı."

"Yeah, Danny was Kurt's manager," l Ben, nodding, thinking about it.

As we approached the lights of Dal- , Ben said, "I think we should close h 'Panamanian Girl.' "

"O.K., if you want to," Brain said.

"It's a good closer."

Tonight was all-ages night at the Gal- Club. The act before Radish, a hard- e punk band, was making a great deal noise; parents were sitting in the back the club, as far away from the appall- sound as possible, while their kids ɔshed up front. The tattooed, buzz-cut ınt man finished a song, then screamed the kids, "What the *fuck*? Go ahead, say *uck you!*' You're allowed to say '*fuck*,' n't you?"

When they finished, Radish took the ıge. Ben tried a little rapport with the dience before starting. "How many ople here have seen the movie 'Beavis d Butt-head Do America'?" he asked. couple of kids raised their hands. e started to say something else, then opped. Later, when I asked him why, said, "It's hard for me to talk to the au- ence. I always feel sort of like some- ıe's going to say, 'Hey, shut up, kid, we ɔn't want to listen to you, you're just kid.' "

The band started with "Simple Sincerity":

Take my simplicity
Take your sincerity
Take my simplicity
Away from me.

Considering what is about to happen) Ben, those words seemed remarkably nowing for a fifteen-year-old. How ıuch did Ben really know?

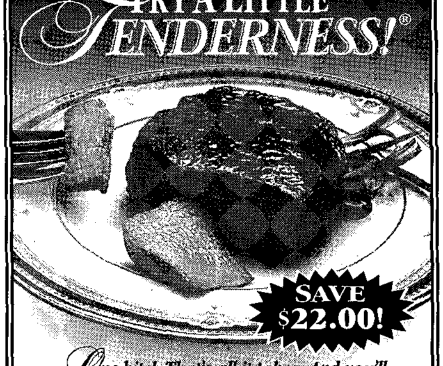
The second song was "Little Pink Stars," which Mercury has just released on radio as the lead track from "Restraining Bolt." The audience got into it. The boys were rockin'! Dee, who was sitting with John's father, shouted, "You know, I wish those boys would play acoustic in their shows! They sound like *angels* together!"

"What?" shouted David, wincing as another riff from Ben's guitar shivered his eardrums.

During "Dear Aunt Arctica," the third song, Ben's vocal mike, which Howie had recently bought, shorted out, and Howie rushed forward to the stage. (At the gig the night before, when one of the bass amps blew, Dee had practically throttled the young slacker bartender, yelling, "My son's amp blew! Do something!") Ben remained calm; he simply walked back from the mike and let John finish the song. It was as though they had rehearsed it. Warren Entner, their prospective manager, who was standing beside me just out of range of a small but potentially hazardous mosh pit that was skirmishing in front of us, shouted, "His composure is amazing!"

The band played "Apparition of Purity," which featured Ben angrily screaming "Purity! Purity!" at the audience. Ben's little sister, Abby, went flying by, moshing with a nine-year-old friend of hers who writes Ben fan letters that say, "Dear Radish. Check here if you love me. Check here if you like me. I love your musik."

As planned, they closed with "Panamanian Girl." The Panamanian Girl herself, a sweet-looking sixteen-year-old, wearing hot-pink leggings under a modest skirt, was right there in front of the stage, looking up at Ben, who had his head bent over his instrument, and his legs akimbo, and was shaking the sound out of it. The girl stretched out her arms. The boy wailed on his guitar. It was the real thing, the moment that Danny Goldberg would soon be selling to the world in shrink-wrapped jewel cases—and once you sell something that's truly part of yourself, you run the risk of losing it forever. It becomes an illusion, a gesture (perhaps ironic) that a girl makes in the video of your song. But Ben probably knew that, too. And at least for now it was a moment so innocent and joyous that Warren Entner and I looked at each other with big grins on our faces, though whether we were smiling out of pleasure or from some subtler understanding of how easy this stuff was to sell I wasn't sure. ◆



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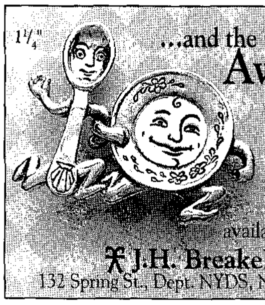

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BOOKS

SMILING BOB

Robert Benchley's highest hopes.

BY JOHN UPDIKE

Robert Benchley's public image was of a purely funny man, the quintessential humorist—none of Thurber's sexual shadows or Perelman's baroque rhetoric for him—and yet his most recent biography, "Laughter's Gentle Soul: The Life of Robert Benchley," by Billy Altman (Norton; $30), left me feeling depressed and faintly indignant. Altman in his foreword seems to be trying, vainly, to buck up his long-dead subject, who "dreaded the notion of being thought of as a 'funnyman,' " and once morosely claimed to Harold Ross, "I am not a writer and not an actor. I don't know what I am." Altman's acknowledgments exude a sweated scent of extended effort; he thanks pages of people who helped him "navigate" his "journey through the maze of Robert Benchley's life," including no fewer than three "editors on this at times seemingly endless labor of love," to whom he is "inordinately indebted" for "the truly saintly extent of their collective patience." His last editor, Amy Cherry, gets special credit for "taking a manuscript that was turned in over so long a period, and gently but firmly helping to shape it into one (I hope) cohesive entity." When he thinks of the services of his agent, Tom Wallace, the author is "genuinely humbled by his ongoing trust in my abilities"; to his "extraordinary wife and best friend" he offers fervent thanks for ignoring his desire, in the late nineteen-eighties, not to begin a family until he was done with this demanding book.

Quel travail! And to what end? By the evidence of Altman's own bibliography, three lives of Benchley (1889-1945) already exist: by Benchley's son Nathaniel, in 1955; by Norris W. Yates, in 1968; and by Babette Rosmond, in 1970. Why yet another? Benchley, once he came into the New York spotlight, in 1919, as the managing editor of *Vanity Fair*, generated a succession of anecdotes that have been thoroughly rehashed. If a raft of new documentary material has emerged since 1970, Altman doesn't describe it for us. What has changed, of course, is the amount of frankness with which the alcoholic and sexual underside of Benchley's affable image can be illumined. But even here Altman tells us less than Marion Meade, who in her 1988 biography of Dorothy Parker, "What Fresh Hell Is This?," confided such lurid tidbits as Benchley's keeping his own kimono at the brothel run by Polly Adler and playing backgammon with the celebrated madam for the services of her whores. Meade wrote that, once Benchley had broken the extramarital ice,

> his love life grew too complex to document easily. In addition to the prostitutes he patronized at Polly Adler's, he made routine overtures to countless women and very often met with success. At any given time, there were four or five women openly claiming to be madly in love with him.

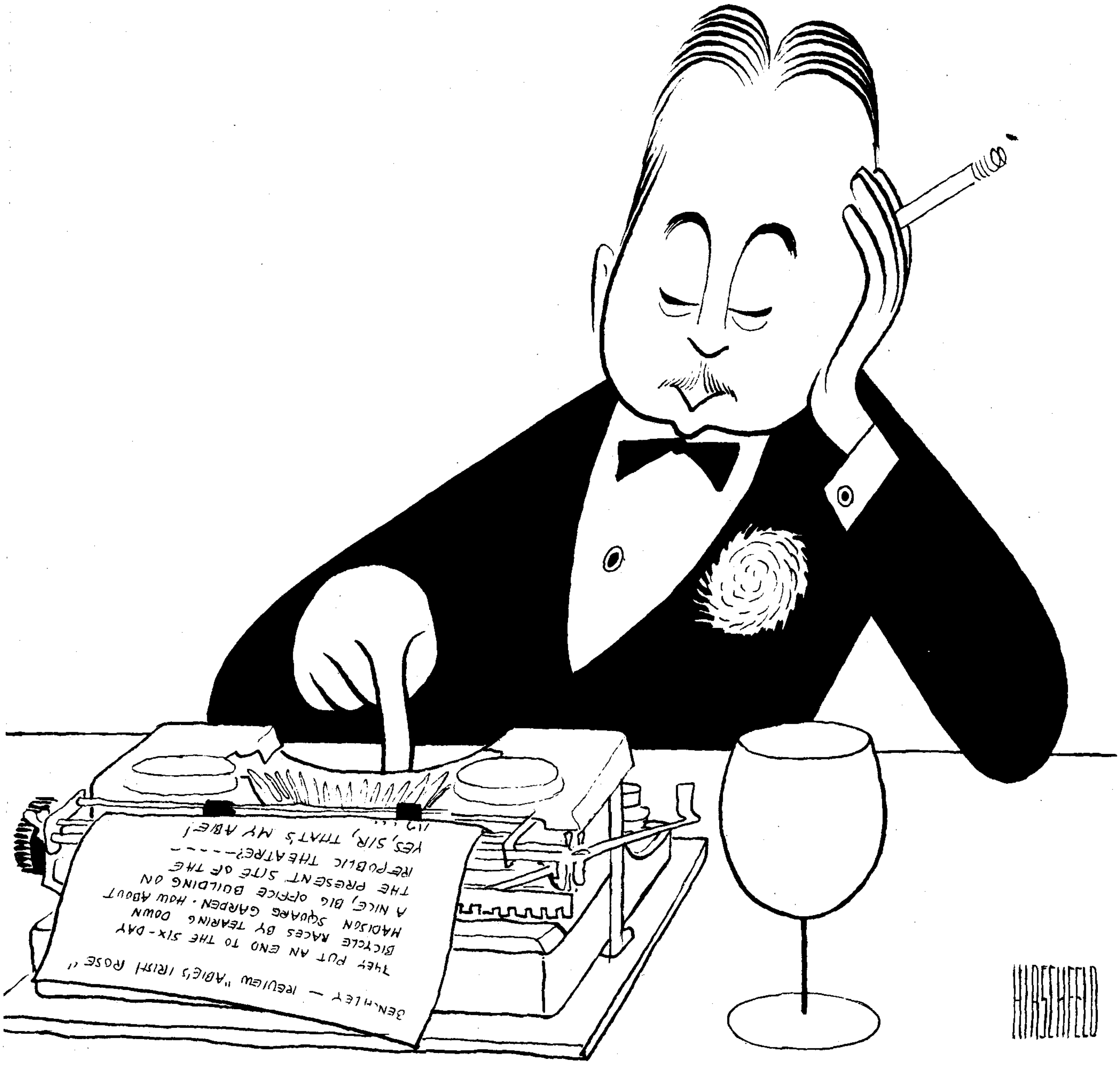
One banker's wife, Meade alleges, was driven by her passion to crawl through the transom of Benchley's room at the Royalton Hotel. Vignettes like this were understandably absent from his son's mid-fifties biography, which loyally presents him as a good father with a weakness for late hours. Babette Rosmond's snippety "Robert Benchley: His Life and Good Times" predates remorseless all-baring, though she does name three of Benchley's more important mistresses—Carol Goodner, Betty Starbuck, and Louise Macy. Altman fills in the portrait of Goodner. She was in 1923 a nineteen-year-old telephone operator in the Biltmore Hotel, near Grand Central Terminal; Benchley, commuting to his wife and two sons
in Scarsdale, passed her often enc
to strike up an acquaintance, which
to, besides unspeakable private rapt
her placement as a showgirl in Ir
Berlin's "The Music Box Revue,
which Benchley was performing hi
mous "Treasurer's Report" routine. G
ner appears in Edmund Wilson's j
nals as "quite a pretty blonde with t
ankles, who, however, I thought,
something of that hard-eyed prosti
stare," but Benchley told Dorothy Pa
"She enters the room like a duchess."
affair with Goodner marked a depar
from an early, idealistic innocence.
cording to Altman:

> If nothing else, the affair with Goo
> resulted in the nearly complete divisio
> Benchley's life into two separate enti
> The line between Benchley the respons
> suburban homeowner with a wife and
> children and Benchley the carousing l
> city boulevardier with a showgirl at his
> was now irrevocably demarcated. Still,
> thought of a divorce seems to have n
> seriously entered his mind.

On the far side of this demarcat
was Gertrude Darling Benchley,
long-loyal, willfully tolerant wife a
perhaps the most enigmatic figure in
Benchley saga. The two of them w
children of the Protestant middle c
in Worcester, Massachusetts. Benchl
father, Charles, was a Civil War vete
and former Navy man who returned
Worcester and settled down as t
mayor's clerk; he was well enough lik
to keep his post under twelve mayors
both parties, but from the viewpoint
his redoubtable, temperance-mind
wife, Jennie, he was an unthrifty s
touch who occasionally returned fr
work suspiciously fragrant of fermen
tion. Gertrude Darling's family own
several woollen mills. She and Rob
knew each other from the age of eig
and early formed a romantic attachme
They became engaged in 1913, the ye
after his graduation from Harvard, a
were married the next year, as Benchl
suffered through a series of unrewardi
jobs and threw off his first sparks of li
erary and thespian talent.

Their son Nathaniel affectionately re
ders the Worcester background:

> Inside the older Worcester houses, dim
> lit by the red, blue, amber, and gree
> stained-glass windows at the stair landing
> were statuettes known as Rogers groups,
> massive steel engravings of stags, or still-li
> compositions that looked like ducks presse


BENCHLEY — REVIEWING "ABIE'S IRISH ROSE"
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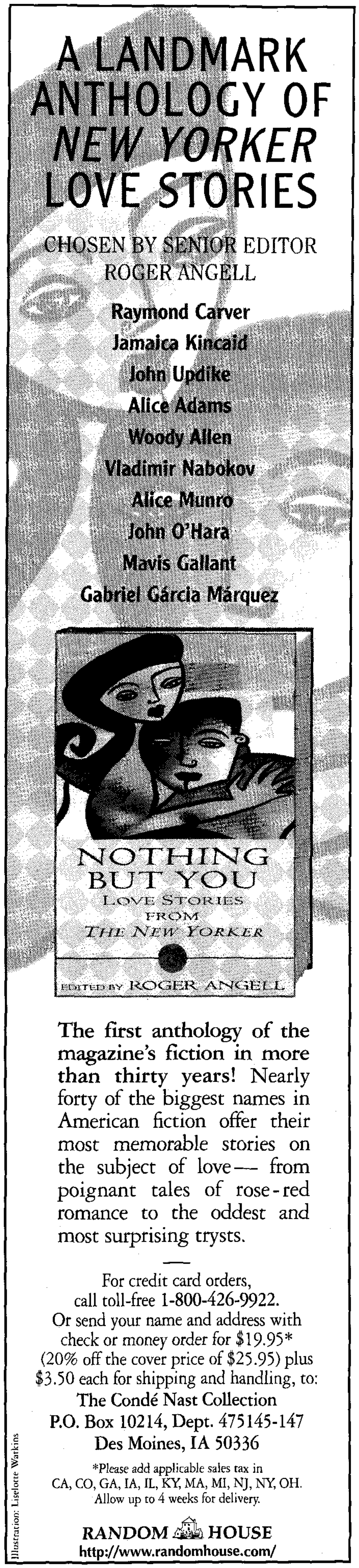
YES, SIR, THAT'S MY ABIE!
HIRSCHFELD

The critic kept hiding behind the amiable, fallible, comical man. Robert Benchley by Al Hirschfeld, 1955.

der glass. There were cuckoo clocks, and avy draperies, and dark paneled walls, and the winter the light from the snow out- le glared through the parlor lace curtains th the brilliance of a battery of cold, white odlights. . . . Worcester was a piece of Vic- rian America that, on the surface, changed tle or not at all.

he worst thing that happened in obert Benchley's Gay Nineties child- ood was the sudden death of his older other, Edmund, a West Point gradu- e killed by a sniper in the brief Spanish- merican War of 1898. Altman's book ntains a poignant photo of the boy obert leaning on the bosom of his uni- rmed big brother. Edmund, who was thirteen years older than Robert, left a fiancée, Lillian Duryea, of a "wealthy starch-manufacturing family in Nyack, New York," who felt obliged to take a hand in Robert's future, and supervised and financed (as a loan) his education at Exeter for a year, and then at Harvard. There is something a touch excessive in this helpfulness, and Benchley's practical helplessness in dealing with such masculine realms as finance and household mechanics may derive from the overload of powerful women in his youth. His middle name was Charles, and his father's politic affability was part of his inheritance, winning out over his strong-minded mother's puritanism. His enduring marriage to Gertrude was rooted in small-city decency, with the concomitant stoic hypocrisy. "A man had his wife," Benchley once explained to James Thurber, "and that was that." Gertrude maintained their Scarsdale house and reared their sons virtually alone, yet she never openly admitted that their bond was broken or even stretched. Years after his death, she told Babette Rosmond, "People asked me if we were going to be divorced—how absurd! Except for the times he was in Hollywood he called me once, sometimes twice a



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day. . . . Do you know, in all the years we were married we never had a cross word!" Altman quotes this from Rosmond's book, but not a more telling—more sadly clear-eyed and brave—statement of Gertrude's: "I had him so early, and I knew what his possibilities were and that I had to share him—so I did."

Benchley when she married him brimmed with possibilities. Elected to the *Harvard Lampoon* on the strength of his cartooning, he rose to become its president while pursuing a burgeoning career as a stage and platform performer; a 1910 Harvard Club meeting in Boston listed among the after-dinner speakers the undergraduate Benchley lecturing on "Through the Alimentary Canal with Gun and Camera." Pleasant-looking if not aggressively handsome, he charmed everyone with his sense of fun and his instinctive kindliness. Though at Harvard he earned a reputation as a wag and a prankster, he was also a teetotalling Christian boy, whose involvement in social work continued into his New York days, and whose social conscience led him eventually to take an active role in the Sacco-Vanzetti protest. His marks at Harvard suffered from his extracurricular activities, but he had a good, quick mind, with a scholarly bent; he read French and German, and for much of his life harbored an ambition to write a book on the reign of Queen Anne. His early comic essays, appearing in the *Tribune Magazine* and *Vanity Fair*, have a gracefully posed bewilderment and an airy breadth of reference that still provoke laughter. From a mock opera synopsis:

> THE RHINE AT LOW TIDE JUST BELOW WELDSCHNOFFEN.—Immerglück has grown weary of always sitting on the same rock with the same fishes swimming by every day, and sends for Schwül to suggest something to do. Schwül asks her how she would like to have pass before her all the wonders of the world fashioned by the hand of man. She says, rotten. He then suggests that Ringblattz, son of Pflucht, be made to appear before her and fight a mortal combat with the Iron Duck. This pleases Immerglück and she summons to her the four dwarfs: Hot Water, Cold Water, Cool, and Cloudy. She bids them bring Ringblattz to her. They refuse, because Pflucht has at one time rescued them from being buried alive by acorns, and, in a rage, Immerglück strikes them all dead with a thunderbolt.

In Benchley, a touch of German was always good for a laugh. Away from the
terrain of addled expertise, his prose
collapse into a disingenuous confes
of its own innocence. From "The S
Life of the Newt," cousin to his m
short "The Sex Life of the Polyp":

> In studying the more intimate phas
> newt life, one is chiefly impressed with
> methods by means of which the males
> their attentions upon the females,
> matrimony as an object. For the newt is
> ter all, only a newt, and has his weakn
> just as any of the rest of us. And I, for
> would not have it different. There is
> enough fun in the world as it is.

Such smiling retreats are disarm
in theatrical and cinematic performa
but can be disappointing where so
kind of intellectual penetration is ca
for. Benchley genuinely loved the
atre. At Harvard, besides acting him
he haunted the cheap balcony seat
the Boston playhouses. He served as
drama critic for *Life* from 1920 to 1
and for *The New Yorker* from 192
1940; he was at his most confident
expansive in dealing with the thea
Yet his reviews—a selection was p
lished by the small Ipswich Press,
1985, titled "Benchley at the Theatre
often seem to pull up lame. Grant
most of the shows he saw were ephe
eral, and the tone of the times was
still, an invitation to think made
uncommonly squirmy. After a stre
ous and persuasive characterization
O'Neill's "Mourning Becomes Elect
as melodramatic and overlong, he g
into his shrug: "I know that this i
purely individual and unworthy reacti
quite out of place in what should b
serious review of a great masterpie
but, as this page is nothing if not p
sonal, I am setting it down." Shak
speare, safely dead and enshrined, is
apologetically knocked: "Only th
people will be allowed to read this lit
piece on 'Macbeth' who will first adr
that they are bored during two-thirds
most Shakespearean performances. .
Most of the spoken words of the I
mortal Bard are like so many drops
rain on a tin roof to this particular me
ber of the *intelligentsia*." He often fin
Shaw lacklustre and long-winded (t
new Shaw plays of this period are n
his greatest), and the finding bree
comic swirls of verbal unease:

> It is agreed, I suppose, that Shaw is
> really Great Man, otherwise he could n
> wearing a full beard, have his picture tak
> in a bathing suit (a test of greatness wh

Napoleon could hardly have come
ıgh with complete success). . . . So ei-
to praise or to pan Shaw must seem
lly presumptuous on the part of a man
, even in his most luxuriant season,
raise only a fragment of a mustache.

critic keeps hiding behind the ami-
, fallible, comical man. In 1935, in
ıll week, he devoted a column to
modesty of his critical effort: "This
ırtment is run solely as a superficial
le to readers—if anything. . . . Any
mpt to intimidate us into a more
ous attitude will be held as an
ingement of the Freedom of the
s." Another column began, "Every
in a while this department wakes
n the middle of the night in a cold
at thinking of how little it really
s its readers in the matter of cul-
l dialectics." Well, why not give
n some cultural dialectics? In dis-
wing any special competence while
tinuing to occupy the reviewer's space,
chley has it both ways, like the bib-
us boulevardier also holding down
burban householder's franchise in
rsdale.

ome emptiness, or laziness, kept him
n living up to his own highest hopes.
maintained a journal, whose origi-
purpose was spiritual introspection.
1913, when he was listlessly working
copywriter for the Curtis Publish-
Company in New York, he wrote:

> must face the fact that I haven't lived up
> xpectations in my work. . . . I have been
> at it, as I have at all other things. Mor-
> , I have lost rather than gained—both in
> power and perception—due, I think, to
> osening grip on spiritual introspection.
> nd myself reverting only occasionally to
> pirations that I used to frequently fall
> n. The work in the settlement house is
> only thing of which I am proud.

s attempts at "serious" writing—
antiwar treatise, a short story about
ubway motorman—came to nothing
to rejection; only his whimsical
ces, and then his theatre reviews,
de it into print. Edmund Wilson,
o in 1920 succeeded Benchley as
naging editor of *Vanity Fair*, left,
his retrospective annotations of his
enties journals, a minority report on
e celebrated wits of the Algonquin
und Table. According to Wilson,
ey "all came from the suburbs and
ovinces,' and a sort of tone was set—
ainly by Benchley, I think—deriving
m a provincial upbringing of people

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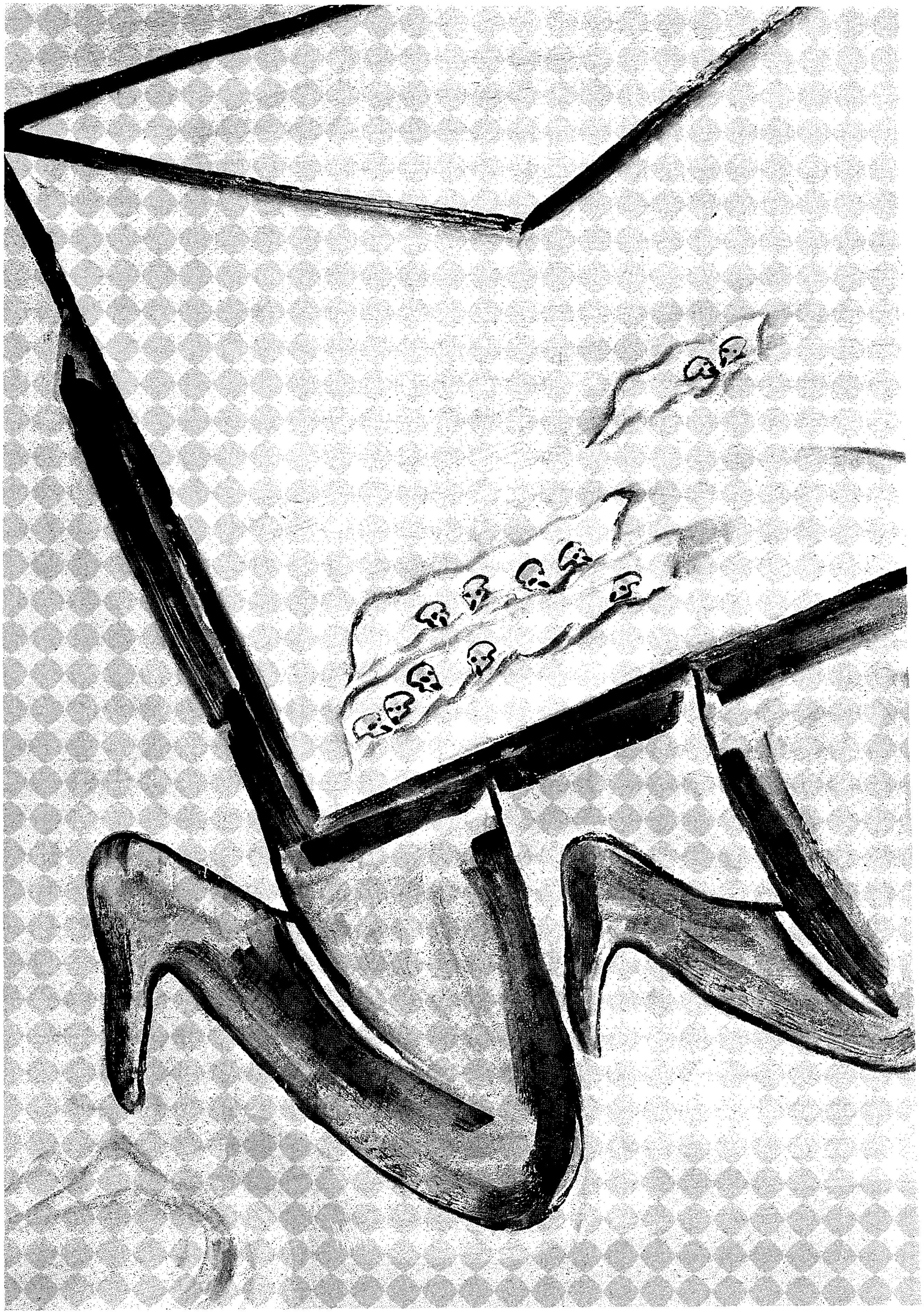


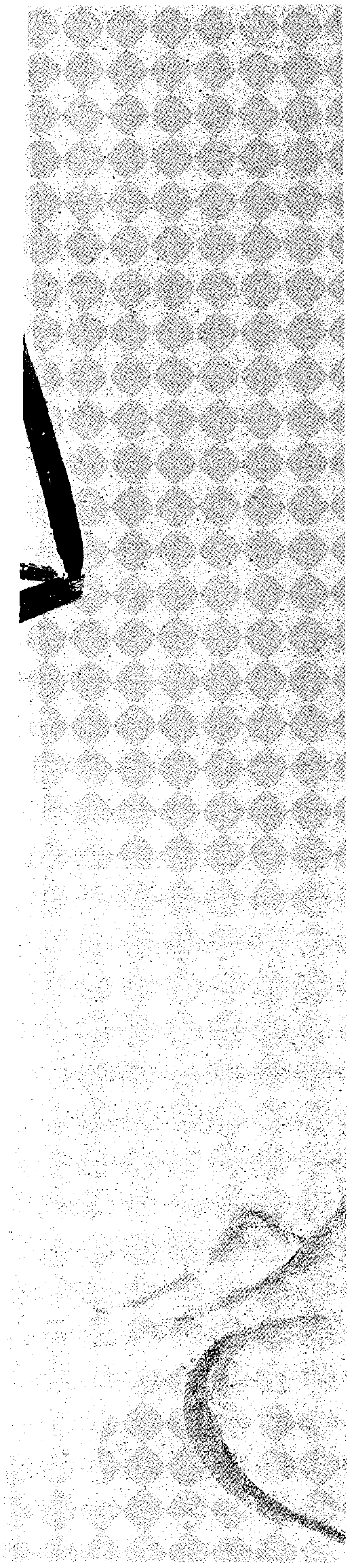
who had been taught a certain kind of gentility . . . which they were now able to mock from a level of New York sophistication. I found this rather tiresome, since they never seemed to be able to get above it." Wilson continued:

> Benchley, as I first knew him, had the manner of a quiet and modest young Harvard graduate, with whom it was pleasant and easy to deal. Later, when he went to Hollywood, where he had some success doing comic shorts, he seemed to have become transformed. He was florid and self-assertive. . . . He got to drinking heavily and died of cirrhosis of the liver. I used, in the days I first knew him, to urge him to do serious satire; but he proved to be incapable of this. His usual character for himself was that of an unsure suburban duffer who was always being frightened and defeated, and this, even in his Hollywood shorts, seemed to be the only role in which he was able to appear.

Beginning in innocence, life is inevitably a corruption; the unusual feature of Benchley's corruption is that it so little enriched his art. That he had artistic gifts is clear in the insouciant but deft weave of his humorous writing, a model for the generation of slightly younger humorists which included Thurber, Perelman, and E. B. White—none of whom, however, remained so abjectly captive to the persona of a "funnyman." This persona, emergent in the droll public performances of his Harvard days, in the end quite shouldered aside the writer in Benchley; in 1943, he announced, "I don't think I write funny anymore. I've run out of ideas. From now on I'm an actor. It's a lot easier and the pay is good." He was fired, after many a missed deadline, as the *New Yorker* theatre critic in 1940; perhaps the writer in him had begun to buckle when he signed up, in 1933, to do a thrice-weekly humor column for the Hearst syndicate. It and his duties as a script-fixer and bit player for R.K.O., and the filming of a new series of shorts for M-G-M, plus the *New Yorker* obligations (besides reviewing theatre, he invented and wrote The Wayward Press), were a staggering burden. He accumulated notes for the Queen Anne book but never got down to writing it. He had never considered himself a real writer anyway, declaring to an inquirer in the early twenties:

> I do not think of myself as a writer in the technical sense of the word. I know practically nothing of the craft, and am constantly in dread of violating some elementary rule which every pupil of English A ought to know. . . . I am usually late with my copy and in a great hurry. I slap it down and hope to God that it is spelled correctly. (God is not always on the job, either.)

One is impressed, reading Altman's biography, by how hard Benchley worked just to keep afloat. *The New Yorker* paid him three hundred dollars a week and the movie studios three to four times that, in the depths of the Depression; yet he was always in debt. By the end of 1944, his Paramount contract paid him seventeen hundred and fifty dollars a week, and his radio appearances provided an additional weekly seven hundred and fifty or a thousand. Furthermore, he was a best-seller, and his book royalties for that year amounted to nearly twenty thousand. With all that, he said, he was only for the first time in his adult life "caught up—give or take a few stray bank loans and those friendly reminders about arrears payments from the Treasury Department." His financial disarray needs no very arcane explanation; he had welcomed Prohibition when it was ratified, in 1919, but his first alcoholic beverage, a speakeasy Orange Blossom in the fall of 1920, when he was all of thirty-one, launched him on a drinking spree that ended only when his body couldn't take any more, twenty-five years later. After his initiation into the joys of the grape, with his superego safely stashed in Scarsdale, he found a compatible Manhattan apartmentmate in the similarly de-repressed Charles MacArthur. In Hollywood, where he lived in the array of bungalows called



NERVOUS ENERGY

The Italian painter Enzo Cucchi has set aside the darker shades he has favored over the past decade for a more colorful palette. In a series of frescoes for the Museo di Capodimonte, in Naples (on view at the Tony Shafrazi Gallery, through April 19th), Cucchi's signature icons—empty ships, smoking volcanoes, poetical skulls (such as the ones in "I, Uno," at the left)—float on seas of blue, green, or yellow brushstrokes. The artist calls the show "Simm' Nervusi" ("We're Nervous"), after a graffito he spotted in the middle of a wall of political slogans, and the brisk new work (the wet-plaster process allowed him less than a day to finish a panel) seems to echo this bemused summary of Neapolitan exuberance.

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the Garden of Allah, he fell in with the minor actor Charles Butterworth. He wrote Gertrude in 1937 that "Charlie has been practically living with me here." Henceforth, Altman says,

> at the Garden of Allah, Benchley and Butterworth were inseparable—and, most of the time, a bottle was in front of them. Albert Hackett recalled that on one trip to Hollywood for a writing assignment, he and his wife were staying in a bungalow next door to Benchley and Butterworth and could hear them drinking and talking when they went to bed around eleven. When the Hacketts got up the next morning and left for the studio at eight-thirty, Benchley and Butterworth were still going strong.

The satisfactions of sitting up all night drinking with Charles Butterworth are not easy to imagine; but then all human exercises in happiness—gluttony, sex, bird-watching, transcendental meditation—appear, when the lives in question are over, rather wasteful.

I WAS a keen consumer of popular culture when Benchley was part of it. I sat in the local theatre and laughed at "The Courtship of the Newt" and "How to Take a Vacation"; I read through his collections—"20,000 Leagues Under the Sea or David Copperfield," "From Bed to Worse or Comforting Thoughts About the Bison"—marvelling at their impudence; I would even have stayed up to listen to his ten-o'clock-Sunday-night radio program, "Melody and Madness," if my parents had let me. A poll in 1939 ranked him sixth among radio stars, just behind Jack Benny, Edgar Bergen, Bing Crosby, Fred Allen, and Bob Hope. His 1928 short "The Treasurer's Report," Altman claims, was "the first continuous sound picture ever attempted by a major studio," and eight years later he participated in "the very first television entertainment program ever aired"—a demonstration co-sponsored by NBC and RCA and transmitted from the top of the Empire State Building to receivers in the RCA Building. His "How to Sleep" won the 1935 Academy Award for best short subject in comedy. Popular culture was then more compact and less dumbed-down; it is hard to imagine any contemporary literary figure becoming such a media celebrity. Benchley represented something to the masses, and as a member of those masses, more than a half century ago, I feel betrayed in reading how careless a custodian he was of
his health and his talents. He di
fifty-six. Altman's biography, mor
idly than the others, gives the det
the medical verdict that Benchle
cirrhosis of the liver, the vitamin
and doses of Benzedrine that kept
going while he kept drinking, the b
outs, the nosebleeds that interrupte
final rounds at "21" and other h
and finally took him to an uptown
pital, where, with faithful Gertrude
in Scarsdale for the night and Nat
in Navy uniform, on the way fro
West Coast, the convivialist died a

"Laughter's Gentle Soul" has s
annoying features—its sappy title,
arch and overlong chapter heads th
most totally disguise the contents,
milky reproduction of the well-ch
clutch of photographs, an index in
croscopic type. It is less good on
Worcester background than Nath
Benchley, and less good on the wri
than, in her bouncy way, Rosmond;
Altman is excellent on Hollywood.
has looked at most of the footage, m
of it distinctly workaday. He desc
the painful results when Benchley
made to act out lesser writers' notio
funniness, and pays some attentio
his bit parts in feature films. Bench
best straight performance, he says fi
was as Deanna Durbin's father in
1941 "Nice Girl?": "For a man who
been an absentee father to his own c
dren for much of their lives, he was
tainly able to project the exact oppo
image in this quietly affecting film."

Nevertheless, the "soiled atmosp
of Hollywood" dragged Benchley do
"Look at me," he told a friend. "A clo
a comic, a cheap gagman. There's a c
for you!" Famously, late one night in
Garden of Allah, at a party where S
Fitzgerald and the then esteemed p
wright Robert Sherwood—once Ben
ley's colleague on *Vanity Fair*—were
present, Benchley, talking to She
Graham, pointed at Sherwood and s
"Those eyes—I can't stand those e
looking at me!" The throng, expecti
one of Benchley's jokes, was stunned
the genuine look of horror in his f
as he went on, "He's looking at me, a
thinking of how he knew me whe
was going to be a great writer—and h
thinking, *now* look at what I am!" T
man who was so liked by everybo
did not, it seems, much like himself.

BRIEFLY NOTED

CONVERSATIONS AT CURLEW CREEK, by
vid Malouf (Pantheon; $23). Malouf's
vels strain so hungrily for the big ques-
ns—what binds us together, what sets
apart, the play of consciousness across
ie and space—that they are sometimes
ficult to catch hold of, but here his tale
folds in a single night. It is 1827, in a
note corner of New South Wales, and
Irish officer has arrived to preside over
hanging of an outlaw at dawn. This
emn event serves as the novel's touch-
ne while Malouf skims between the hard-
abble farms of Australia and the deer
ks of the Irish gentry with his custom-
moral subtlety and sensual ease.

ANISH LOVER, by Joanna Trollope (Ran-
m House; $23). Lizzie has been rather
ug about her thriving marriage, her four
ildren, her successful shop, and her big
use, but she becomes unconscionably
lous when Frances, her quiet, devoted
in, finds love with the sexy, supportive,
t married—and foreign—Luis. This
itish author excels at setting up the stuff
female fantasy and, from those worn
aterials, making something that draws
u in and slams you with a thud of emo-
n so authentic it becomes your own.

MAS JEFFERSON AND SALLY HEMINGS:
N AMERICAN CONTROVERSY, by Annette
ordon-Reed (Virginia; $29.95). Hemings,
slave who was one-quarter African, was
so a half sister of Jefferson's deceased
ife, and she lived at Monticello for many
ars. In this understated, brilliant study
African-American law professor exam-
es the allegation that Jefferson was the
ther of Hemings' children. Gordon-Reed
es not take a stand in the debate but
emonstrates some sloppy work by histo-
ans who have claimed to clear Jefferson
accusations of fornication and miscege-
ation. Her clarity persuades us to keep our
inds open until DNA testing can settle
e argument.

N WAYNE'S AMERICA, by Garry Wills (Si-
on & Schuster; $26). If this book is not
Vills at his absolute finest, that is largely be-
use he co-stars in it with John Wayne. The
ouble is not that Wayne dwarfs Wills—
e doesn't—but that the myth of John Wayne
omes apart at a single touch, as, of course,
ost celluloid myths tend to do. Wills
uccessfully analyzes the political encrus-
ation of Wayne's persona; the unexplained
ystery is the credulity of Wayne's au-
ience, which took seriously the Vietnam-
ra jingoism of a man who worked very
ard to stay out of the Second World War.

LLECTED POEMS, by Edgar Bowers (Knopf;
25). Surety of rhythm, swiftness of thought,
nd deftness of phrase animate Bowers' tri-
umphant poems about loss and the struggle
o be whole. He is, above all, a delineator—
ital, ironic, capable of panoramic sweep—of
is transfiguring experiences in Germany dur-
ng and after the Second World War. His
oots are deep in Horace and Pindar, but amid
ll the eloquent austerity there are blessed mo-
ments of unexpected Mozartian lilt and wit.

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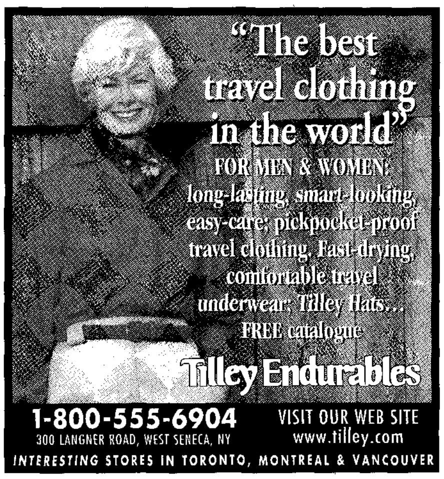

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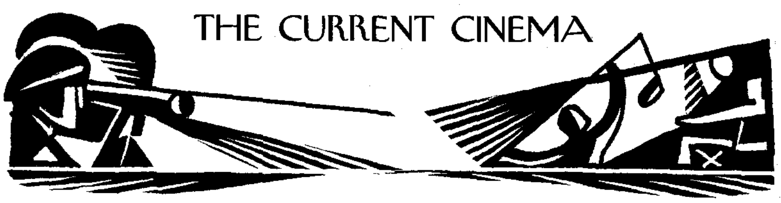


THE CURRENT CINEMA

THE AWFUL TRUTH

An adult thriller, and a youthful romantic comedy.

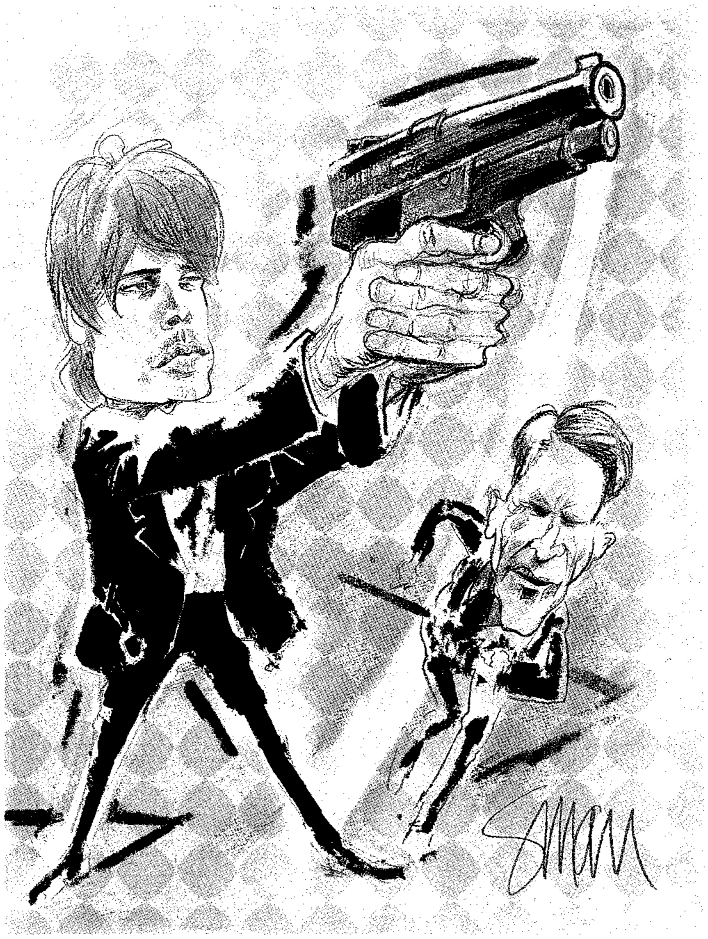
BY TERRENCE RAFFERTY

TOM O'MEARA (Harrison Ford), the hero of Alan J. Pakula's "The Devil's Own," is a middle-aged New York City cop, who, out of the goodness of his Irish-American heart, takes in a shy, taciturn young immigrant named Rory Devaney (Brad Pitt) and then discovers that his polite lodger is in fact an I.R.A. terrorist on an arms-purchasing mission. To the audience, there's no mystery about the identity of Tom's tenant. By the time Rory arrives in New York, the movie has told us who he is: that his real name is Frankie McGuire; that the formative event of his childhood, in Northern Ireland, was the execution of his father by a Protestant commando; and that in his maturity he is a dedicated revolutionary, willing and able to kill for the Republican cause. The script—which is credited to David Aaron Cohen, Vincent Patrick, and Kevin Jarre—thereby adheres to the sound Hitchcockian principle that suspense is better than mystery: the tension is generated, theoretically, by the discrepancy between the viewer's knowledge and the hero's ignorance. We're meant to sweat bullets as we wait for the good guy to catch on: what will he do when he finds out the awful truth? That's the way this kind of thriller is supposed to work, anyway, but Pakula, puzzlingly, seems determined to keep us from getting too excited. "The Devil's Own" is so resolutely unsuspenseful that at a certain point you begin to wonder whether the movie, like Rory, has a hidden agenda; there's something shifty about it.

But you don't need to be much of a detective to see through the disguise, because Pakula actually wants to be unmasked. He does everything in his power to insure that we won't mistake his apparent thriller for a *real* thriller. Pakula's first big success as a director was the tense, quick-witted "Klute" (1971), and in the many suspense movies he has made since then his pace has become more and more deliberate, as if he had decided never to give an audience that k
pleasure again. He has become a virtu
retarding narrative momentum, and in
sumed Innocent" (1990) and "The P
Brief" (1993) he appeared to have ach
as a reward for his lonely resear
rhythm that approached pure stas
storytelling technique as agonizing
mime's running-against-the-wind ro
Since "The Devil's Own" contains
amount of action, Pakula has to use
cunning to sustain the illusion that no
is happening. He relies heavily on Go
Willis's dark-toned cinematography
James Horner's mournful pseudo-Celti
sic, and when those elements aren't suff
to impede the movie's forward progre
inserts a long, brooding closeup of one
stony-faced stars. And the picture isn't
satisfied to drag itself down with the
trappings of serious, adult drama; in the
it tries to assume the weight of tra

At least that brings the lumberin
hicle, finally, to a halt. What's excru
ing about Pakula's serious, adult appr
is that it deprives us of basic suspe
movie entertainment without compe
ing us in the form of a single idea th
adult could take seriously. "The De
Own" doesn't supply any insight, pol
or psychological, into the intractable p
lems of Northern Ireland; the violent sc
that take place there, early in the film
impressive, in a Hollywood-spectacle
of way, but academic and smugly "p
erful." Although you can (grudgingly)
give the movie that failure—the situa
in Northern Ireland has reduced be
films than this to babbling incoheren
it's harder to overlook the filmmakers
fusal to examine either the confused
tudes of Irish-American Catholics tow
the I.R.A. or the terrorists' conflicted f
ings about their affluent, sentime
American benefactors. Rory is place
the O'Meara home by a judge named
ter Fitzsimmons (George Hearn), w
unlike Tom, is fully aware of the yo

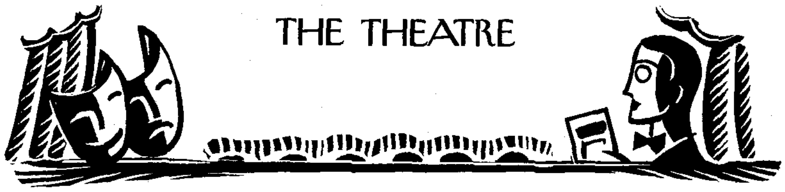
identity and his activities, and once potentially fascinating character has ed his simple plot function the movie him like a hot potato: Pakula and reenwriters blithely pass up the op- nity to explore the easy revolution- omanticism of successful Irishmen Fitzsimmons—an exploration that t have given the picture a little irony ite. "The Devil's Own" is ly uninterested in Rory's ions to the freedom and ve tranquillity of Ameri- ife: there's no suggestion that someone in his cir- stances might resent, or ast be made uneasy by, contented domesticity ie middle-class family se home he's sharing. istead of troubling us with il and political ironies, Devil's Own" drama- the relationship between -Americans and the em- ed Old Sod by means of stonishingly banal male- ling motif. Rory has no er; Tom has no son. It's difficult to predict that men will become close will finally, alas, have to t each other (perhaps on at loaded with small nu- r devices) over their ir- ncilable values. This is re the tragic resonances are nt to kick in, but some- the climax fails to inspire , terror, or even a return to consciousness in the som- nt audience. Both of the ure's stars shed dim light here, as if were coming to us from a galaxy far, away. Pitt manages a credible Irish ent, but then stops acting, as if vo- mimicry were character; most of his formance consists of rote romantic- law shtick. Though Ford projects characteristic stolid decency, it isn't rly enough to carry a load like "The vil's Own." Everyone complains about d, juvenile action pictures, but Pakula's ted middle-aged melodrama is the sort novie that gives maturity a bad name.



Running against the wind: Brad Pitt plays an I.R.A. terrorist and Harrison Ford is a New York City cop in "The Devil's Own."

Kevin Smith's low-budget "Chasing Amy," a young comic-book artist ned Holden (Ben Affleck) falls in e—against his better judgment—with retty, vivacious blonde named Alyssa (Joey Lauren Adams), who is, inconveniently, a lesbian. As obstacles in the course of true love go, that's fairly major, and it's also a solid premise for a contemporary romantic comedy: a genre that, despite its continuing popularity, desperately needs renovation. Romantic comedy depends on the invention of plausible ways of delaying the lovers' ultimate happiness (and therefore the audience's vicarious gratification), and in recent years filmmakers seem to have run out of fresh ideas; mostly, they've been recycling Jane Austen's. The apparently non-negotiable difference of sexual orientation in "Chasing Amy" has the advantage, at least, of impeding the main characters' romantic progress without requiring them to take tea with the vicar, wear complicated hats, or suffer fits of ague. And, besides, Alyssa's preference for girls is a more concrete stumbling block than the wispy neuroses that frequently frustrate lovers in today's non-period romances. (If the only thing keeping the hero and the heroine apart is, say, fear of commitment or childish self-absorption, the viewer is apt to lose patience, quickly: it's exhausting to spend ninety minutes in the dark muttering "Get over yourself" at the people on the screen.)

But, although Smith deserves some credit for ingenuity, he doesn't have the skill to maintain a pleasurable sense of anticipation for an entire movie. This picture, his third, is as crummy-looking and as sluggishly paced as his début feature, "Clerks" (1994); at this point, his amateurishness can't be explained away as a suburban-grunge aesthetic style, or as any kind of style at all. What's most disappointing about "Chasing Amy" is that Smith abandons his good comic premise halfway through the picture. After a period of platonic friendship, Holden persuades Alyssa to give heterosexuality a shot, and his hopeless-seeming love is, to everyone's surprise, enthusiastically requited. It's hard not to suspect that this sudden development represents a failure of nerve—that Smith is reluctant to give the heroine's "conversion" the status of a happy ending. The movie spends its first hour or so flirting ostentatiously with political incorrectness, then abruptly reverses field and runs away from the more controversial implications of its sexual comedy. Alyssa, we learn, was never exclusively homosexual: she has experimented—extensively—with both sexes. Holden's best friend and artistic collaborator, Banky (Jason Lee), whose primary contribution to the early scenes is a relentless barrage of rude anti-gay jokes, is accused, in the second half of the film, of being a repressed homosexual himself. And, worst of all, Holden undergoes a metamorphosis from a character whose problem is simply that he's the wrong sex for the object of his desire into one whose difficulties are entirely of his own making: he's just another nineties whiner. Romantic comedy is probably a sturdy enough form to survive all sorts of contemporary ambivalence about love, sex, and marriage. If "Chasing Amy" is any indication, the disease most likely to finish the genre off is self-consciousness. ♦



SHAKESPEAREAN RAG

Ellington restitched, and the redemption of "Violet."

BY JOHN LAHR

THE venerable Duke Ellington, who became fascinated by Shakespeare in the nineteen-fifties and wrote the Shakespearean suite "Such Sweet Thunder" and the incidental music to "Timon of Athens," has now had twenty-three of his songs strung out on a thread of plot from Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night." The enterprise, at the Brooks Atkinson, is called "Play On!" and bears as much relation to Shakespeare as a termite to a tree. Ellington's music, of course, is wonderful, but the musical is not; it's a piece of cultural strip-mining which, in the name of profit, lays waste to monuments of both black and Anglo-Saxon cultures. The Broadway musical may be the only billion-dollar industry that is afraid to develop new products; instead, it recycles the old sounds, the old formulas, the old racial and choreographic stereotypes, and then wonders why the art form is dying. Here's a show that has nearly two dozen memorable songs—including "Don't Get Around Much Anymore," "I Got It Bad (and That Ain't Good)," and "Mood Indigo"—but still goes nowhere. Musical theatre tells a story through song, but Ellington's songs were not written to illuminate character; instead, in this mutant production character is fiddled to legitimatize songs. "Which way Harlem?" the bumpkin songwriter Vy asks, arriving at Grand Central Terminal as the show begins; fifteen noisy minutes and two production numbers later ("Take the 'A' Train" and "Drop Me Off in Harlem"), she's still not really there. It's typical of "Play On!," whose weird hubbub is like an engine racing in neutral.

"Twelfth Night" meets the Duke, in "Play On!"

The show, which is set in the forties, features the disconcerting nineties voice of Cheryl Freeman, who plays Vy—a pert young woman forced to disguise herself as a man to get her songs to the lovelorn Duke (the big-voiced Carl Anderson), a successful uptown composer and bandleader. Neither Freeman nor the show's book, by Cheryl L. West, has much fun with the confusion of genders, although Freeman always seems well pleased by the performance she's giving. Her voice, which has more decoration on it than a Fabergé egg, calls attention to her, not to the character. Occasionally, however, the notional plot meets a song in the right way and extends the story. In Luther Henderson's terrific arrangement of "It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)," for example, the grave, buttoned-down street simulacrum of Malvolio, called Rev (well played and powerfully sung by Lawrence Hamilton), is transformed into a zoot-suited hipster
to woo his love, the temperament
singer Lady Liv (the superb Tonya
kins). Pinkins herself stops the show
"I Ain't Got Nothin' But the Blue
though the slack hand of the dir
Sheldon Epps, can't contain Pin
impulse for self-indulgence. The pr
tion, humorously costumed by Mar
Elliott with all the Day-Glo dazzl
Red Grooms painting, does best
bright comic moments. Larry Ma
and André De Shields, as two ne'e
wells called Sweets and Jester, wh
having bimbo problems, bring the
down with Ellington's great blues "F
in My Bed"; and Yvette Cason ma
to break out of the handcuffs of ca
ture when she and Marshall team u
"Love You Madly." These fine
formers generate a great deal of
but no real warmth. What is dis
certing about "Play On!," and
too typical of Broadway mus
these days, is to see the pu
whipped up and let down at
same time.

"VIOLET" (at Playwrights H
zons) is a much more
venturous musical, which, lik
eponymous heroine, sets out
strange, brave journey whose
obstacle turns out to be not
phony miracle worker Violet
in search of but the maker
the show, whose commercial
stincts undermine the integrity o
material. The musical's impres
assets are the compelling scor
Southern mix of blues and coun
and-Western, by Jeanine Tes
shrewd staging by Susan H. Sc
man; and a moving, almost
spired performance by Lauren W
Ward plays Violet, a woman in her n
twenties who sets off on Septembe
1964, by bus, from Spruce Pine, N
Carolina, on a pilgrimage to Tu
Oklahoma, where she hopes to
healed at the hands of a televis
Preacher. What Violet wants to h
though, is not her soul but her f
Violet is ugly. (The musical is adap
from Doris Betts's "The Ugliest
grim.") When Violet was thirteen,
head of her father's axe came off its h
dle and gashed her. The scar is, of cou
a mythic wound, but it's also a very s
cific, humiliating one in Violet's t
Her need—"a need so giant," she says

mpelling, because it is universal: ıeed to be redeemed in the flesh. scar, she sings, “cuts a rainbow ·· across my cheek.” It turns her a kind of prodigy of pain. Where ty creates in the viewer a magical e of someone blessed by God, ıess creates the reverse—a sense eing abandoned by Him. Violet’s nd isolates and shames her. People t believe their eyes or take their off her. “I wasn’t born with this ” she tells an old lady on the bus, se prying eyes give her away. “It an axe blade to split my face in two.” ːr, when she corners the Preacher, ;ays, “Maybe it’s vain to *worry* you’re , but if you’re worse than ugly? If re *disfigured!* That’s not vanity, that’s , pure and simple.”

’et the production, having set itself fascinating musical task of exploring ırmity, refuses to show it. Neither et nor her childhood shadow, Young the excellent Amanda Posner), has ;figuring scar. A strand of hair down right side of Violet’s face is meant ıggest it, but this artifice assures that audience never has to bear witness he monstrousness—just to its meta- r. It’s the theatrical equivalent of en- ntering the Hunchback of Notre- ne without the hump. Even if this . doesn’t completely spoil the game, ›wers the theatrical stakes. “No one . look at me / No one will dare to nd / The time it takes to / Look at ,” Violet sings desperately to the acher. And the production won’t, ei- r. There’s no failure of talent in “Vio- ’; there’s only a failure of nerve. ıulman and Tesori, along with Brian ıwley, who wrote the book and the cs, want to move the musical away m its traditional routes but have ca- ulated to the most well worn of ›adway dead ends: its strictures about ›yancy and box-office.

All of us are scarred, but the wounds usually internal; that Violet’s scar ı’t be hidden is her tragedy and, in the l, a kind of triumph. It’s what makes r such a fascinating musical subject. ıe play dramatizes a gutsy, thoughtful ıng woman trying to seize her life. But refusing to show the deformity the ısical also refuses to let the audience ͤ through her repulsiveness to her auty, to find in itself the maturity that ͤ tale shows in others.

On her bus ride (nicely conveyed by Schulman with a simple arrangement of chairs), Violet hooks up with two soldiers going to their base at Fort Smith, Arkansas. Monty (the slick Michael Park) is a sweet-talking, loutish white boy; Flick (the compelling Michael McElroy) is a compassionate, saturnine black sergeant. Violet, who has been raised by her widowed father (Stephen Lee Anderson), is easy with men: she can drink and play poker. One of Brian Crawley’s best songs is a poker lesson, “Luck of the Draw,” in which we see Young Vi learning the game from her father in the foreground, while in the background Violet beats her cocky new friends in a game. The song, which is eloquently staged, also haunts the play: “I say most things fall in line / By the luck of the draw.” Flick, in kidding Violet about the miracle that she is so certain of finding, suggests that they swap faces. “But what do I want with colored skin?” she says. “I want people to think I’m pretty.” He is as scarred by his skin as she is by hers, and on this irony the plot turns. But not before Violet has her suitcase stolen in Memphis; sleeps with Monty, who puts her down gently by promising to be waiting at the Fort Smith bus depot when she passes through again that Sunday; and encounters the vainglorious televangelist (Robert Westenberg). It’s here, where the show thinks it’s doing so well, with a gospel choir and the hardworking Preacher ranting up and down the aisle, that the musical loses momentum. Crawley can’t bring anything new to the cliché of the bogus healer; we lose the spiritual issues in all this vamping folderol. He does much better in Violet’s post-Preacher delusional state: she has angry flashbacks of herself with her father in which she unfairly accuses him of intentionally not taking her to the doctor for five years. “You were afraid I’d leave if I were pretty, so you took care of that,” she says. In the end, Violet finds her way back to Fort Smith, and both Monty and Flick are there to greet her. Monty sees deformity; Flick sees love. Violet and Flick fall into an interracial embrace. What Violet finds is not the miracle of a renovated face but the miracle of connection. Here, at its last and best moment, “Violet” suggests that there’s divinity in that. ◆

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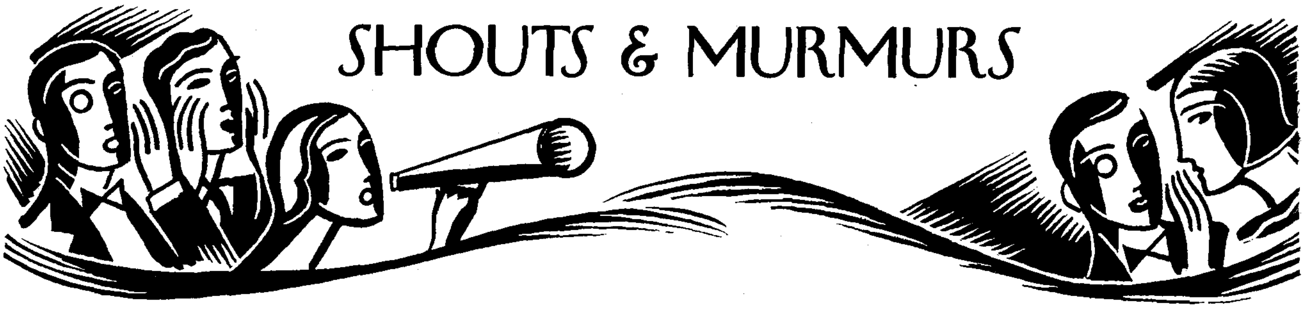


NEAR-DEATHBED REQUESTS

BY MARK KATZ

THE worst part of dying, I imagine, is ceasing to exist. Brushes with death force us to confront the unknowable void and the grim prospect of eternal nothingness. But during a late-season bout with this year's flu—which I felt certain I would lose—metaphysics gave way to death's more mundane dilemmas. In my woozy DayQuil haze, I contemplated the consequences of my untimely passing. Before long, my dark indulgence became genuine dread, as I conjured the many ill-considered judgments, gestures, and rationalizations that might be made with the license of these words: *"Mark would have wanted it that way."* Today, I am a flu survivor, but one still haunted by the niggling details of my aftermath. To avoid confusion, I've left specific instructions on a stack of unused Kleenex:

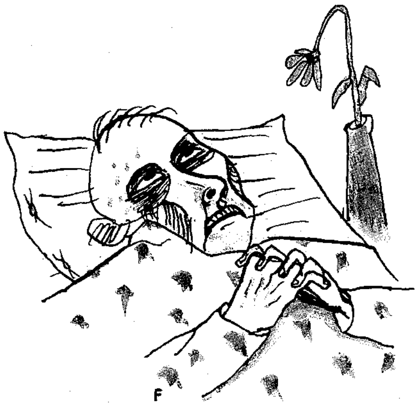
ATTENDING THE FUNERAL

If you find yourself asking, "Did I know Mark well enough to attend his funeral?" the answer is yes. Valid or not, one measure of a life's worth is the head count at the funeral, and, having reviewed the guest list, I realize that I must rely on acquaintances and friends of friends to reach critical mass. Each pewful of mourners is another round of ammo in my send-off salute.

For those who are travelling when I die: If you have an unrestricted coach ticket, you can return without penalty and your attendance will be expected. If you are travelling on a nonrefundable Super-Saver™ and must purchase a new ticket, I wouldn't have wanted you to spend more than:

$100—co-workers, friends fallen out of touch.
$250—friends, relatives (including cousins and in-laws).
$400—immediate family and close friends; current girlfriends.
$500—old girlfriends.

Regarding theatre tickets: If it's a show you've been dying to see and tickets are impossible to get, that's one thing. But if it's anything involving David Copperfield just eat the tickets and show up without complaint.



INTERVIEW REQUESTS

Should the tragic circumstances of my death involve a gruesome crime, faddish disease, or spectacular disaster, the media will very likely take an interest and may try to reach you for a tearful interview. Who do you agree to talk to?

Yes: David Frost, Bryant Gumbel, Bill Moyers, Ken Burns, Lesley Stahl.

No: Don Imus, Stone Phillips, Gabe Pressman, Bob Woodward, Andy Rooney.

DISTRIBUTION OF BODY PARTS

In a rare noble gesture, I signed my organ-donor card. But if it comes down to a decision between equally worthy patients, these are the criteria I would have wanted used as a tiebreaker:

1. No prior convictions.
2. Must be committed to *real* campaign-finance reform.
3. Trivia toss-up: Name the actor who portrayed TV's Mannix: ____________.

POSTNUPTIAL AGREEMENT

If I am ever murdered by my spou would not have wanted our chil placed in her custody.

MOURNING ETIQUETTE

No shirt, no shoes, no service.

Don't be afraid to cry. I've always known as a rather lighthearted sort, you might suppose I'd prefer a bitters memorial that celebrated my whim spirit with the joyful noise of laug You'd be wrong. I would have want funeral where the hushed sounds of fled sobbing are broken only by the of hollow, mournful wails. (Pick a with good acoustics.)

SUGGESTED TALKING POINTS

- Mark treasured life and all its won
- Mark pursued a meaningful tionship with God and other auth figures.
- Later in life, Mark became a tir advocate of annual flu shots.
- My life pales in comparison to rich, selfless journey that was Mark's.
- If there was any tension in my tionship with Mark, it was because I secretly envious of his abundant tal easy charm, and thick-curled, effortle stylish hair. I blame myself, not him.
- *For Sheila, Beth, Marnie, Suzette, Karen H.:* Now I can see that I betra Mark, discarding his honest, endur love for reasons that really had to do my own hangups, only to wind up some loser who's not half the man M was. I am such an idiot.
- Mark cherished smoked oysters. bet I'll have another!
- Some crowd!
- Sh-h-h! Let's all listen carefully the stirring eulogy Mark wrote for occasion. ♦

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